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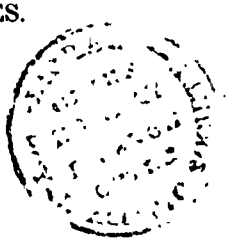
"THE PICKWICK PAPERS," "NICHOLAS NICKLEBY," &c.

With Illustrations by George Cruikshank, Phiz, &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

MM-h-25



LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,

GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

MDCCCXLI.

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824.8
Dic/Pic
94435

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LONDON:

PRINTED BY C. J. PALMER, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

ESTHER:

A TALE

OF

SPAIN IN THE SIXTH CENTURY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"BRAMBLETYE HOUSE."

ESTHER.

CHAPTER I.

It is deep night, the moon is only in her second quarter, and a few fleecy clouds are occasionally wafted athwart her surface; but still there is light enough at intervals to reveal to us yonder dark craggy mountains, which form a majestic background to a battlemented city occupying the summit and slopes of a rocky hill, protected on two of its sides by ramparts, frowning over the precipitous banks of a river, and on the others by a lofty wall, surmounted with numerous towers. Old pagan temples converted into Christian basilicks, houses, convents, churches, and irregular

piles of building, both massive and grotesque, fill up the enclosure of the walls; the highest point being crowned with a keep or castle. From the mound in its centre springs a lofty cork-tree, to the topmost boughs of which has been nailed a flagstaff sustaining a black banner emblazoned with a silver cross. Not, however, to that sacred symbol, thus seeming to invite the protection of heaven, have the inhabitants exclusively committed their safety during the night; for sentinels may be seen pacing the walls and battlements, their arms gleaming for a moment in the partial moonbeam, and then lost in obscurity; while the distant bark of a dog, or the indistinct voice of some watchman on the ramparts, renders more deep and intense the succeeding silence of the whole sleeping city.

Within yonder keep, surrounded by his chosen body-guards, resides Leovigild, a Visigothic monarch of Spain, who has chosen Toledo for his principal residence, and adding to the natural strength of its position by walls and fortifications, has converted this ancient stronghold of the Romans into a flourishing metropolis, and an almost impregnable fortress. Allured by the presence and protection of royalty, and enriched by the piety or superstition of their converted conquerors, the Spanish clergy have embellished the

city with various religious edifices distinguished for their size and solidity, as well as by the richness of their interior decorations. Not yet aspiring, however, to possess an architecture of their own, and despising the literature which sufficed not to preserve its possessors from subjugation, the Visigoths have left the native builders to their own tastes, and suffered all the offices of the church to be filled by Romans, who have constructed their religious edifices according to one established mode; so that there is little variety of style in those upon which we are gazing, although the commanding position of the city, thrown into fitful light and shade by the cloud-swept moon, imparts to it an appearance equally noble and picturesque.

There is something affecting, even to awfulness, in thus contemplating a whole population, with all its different orders from the monarch to the beggar, and all their varieties of happiness or anguish, hushed in universal slumber, and all equally enjoying the great restorative of nature. How soul-subduing is the perfect stillness, the deathlike tranquillity of this sleeping multitude! But hush! the silence is partially broken even while I describe it, and a low solemn strain, wafted over the walls and towers, is floated towards us by the winding river. It proceeds

from the convent of St. Isidore, whose monks are assembled every second hour during the night to chant a hymn to the Virgin.

They have concluded their devotions and all is again hushed, save that a single voice rises from another quarter, giving to the night air snatches of sound little in accordance with those we last heard; for it is a Bacchanalian song, vented in the tones of one who has revelled too deeply to be solicitous about the propriety of his festive carol. See! yonder, without the walls, where the sloping base of the mountain stretches into the plain, you may discern the singer, a youth of distinguished and comely appearance, whose rich habits attest his rank, while his flushed features and unsteady footsteps betray recent indulgence in o'erflowing cups. Forgetful that the city will be barred against all ingress until sunrise, he seems to be exploring his way to the gates, and yet he only strays from one crag to another in inextricable bewilderment, though without any dejection of spirit, if we may judge from the continued bursts of his vivacious song. Ha! we have now lost sight of him.

He has rambled into the dark cavernous opening scooped in the side of yonder rocky mass, and as he emerges not again, he may perchance have thrown himself down to sleep within its shelter,

unless he be forcibly detained by some of the lawless wanderers who, under the disguise of hermits, begging friars, and monkish itinerants, occasionally betake themselves for the night, at the time of the church festivals, to those dark haunts. If he have fallen into such hands, and the lonesomeness and obscurity of the place should prompt them to unholy deeds, I will not answer for his purse, nor even for his life, in spite of the battle-axe stuck into his leathern girdle. Gentle reader, are you anxious to learn his fate? Leave me then to explain it. An author's power of ubiquity shall transport me into the cave whither he has wandered,—I will trace his footsteps, become an eye-witness of his adventures, and render unto thee a faithful report of all that I hear and see.

Leovigild, king of the Spanish Visigoths in the sixth century, having augmented his influence by marrying the widow of the late monarch, took from the Romans many of the cities and fortresses which they had hitherto maintained upon the coasts of the Peninsula, compelled the large province of Cantabria to acknowledge his sway, and, subduing the mountainous districts in the heart of his dominions, at length enjoyed a peace, of which the continuance was secured by the fears of his neighbours and the quiet submission of his subjects, although the majority of them were

catholics, while their Gothic rulers were stanch adherents to the Arian heresy.

The king's synod attempted, without much success, to reconcile their scruples by abolishing some of the most unpopular rites of Arianism; but in spite of the solicitations of his more jealous clergy, Leovigild resolutely refrained from using against the dissenters the customary spiritual arguments of fire and sword. A forbearance so rare in an era of ignorance and illiberality has won for this monarch more praise than he deserved, since it proceeded less from benevolence or enlarged views than from selfishness, and indifference. Inaction, ever injurious to the character of semi-barbarians, had combined with age and infirmity in debilitating the vigour of Leovigild, both mental and corporeal.

War had developed his virtues; peace was now disclosing his weakness and vices. To the thirst of conquest had succeeded the love of tranquillity, while all his former activity and hardihood had sunk into a slothful devotion to the pleasures of the table. Scrupulous in observing the external forms of religion, he cared little about creeds and rituals; never failing to uphold the pomp, and to discharge the official duties of a king, he seldom thought about the welfare of his subjects; and took little further interest in his kingdom than as

it ministered to his own personal gratifications. Like most illiterate men of royal station, he was a sensualist: his empire supplied him abundant means for indulging in luxurious pleasures; he hated any thing that threatened to interrupt his indolent enjoyments; and he had therefore become from constitution rather than from principle, a lover of peace and toleration.

He had two sons, Hermenegild and Recared; the former of whom, deeming his father's mode of life injurious and unworthy, piqued himself upon imitating the rough and martial bearing of his ancestors, which in the two centuries that had elapsed since the first conquest of the country, aided by the influence of an enervating climate, was now rapidly degenerating among all classes of the Visigoths. Although he habitually wore the rich ornaments and distinctive badges that marked his princely rank, he affected in every thing else the fierce appearance, and blunt, not to say rude deportment of a primitive Gothic soldier; never moving without a battle-axe stuck in his belt, priding himself upon his personal comeliness and strength, as well as his skill in all his military exercises, and desiring no other amusements than the sports of the field succeeded by an intemperate wassail with boon companions, who loved the chase and the revel as ardently as himself.

Though some few of his noble countrymen had begun to cultivate such literature as the monks could teach, which was principally restricted to controversial divinity, Hermenegild, despising attainments which he considered unsoldierly and even effeminate, boasted his ignorance of all arts except that of war, the only one that it befitted princes to understand and practise. Notwithstanding his dissolute course of life, and in spite of his intellectual darkness, our young prince deemed himself a devout Christian, since he professed a firm belief in the Arian doctrines, which, after they had occasioned a war of nearly three hundred years, had now been abandoned by all the nations of Europe except the Spanish Visigoths.

In assuming the character we have described, Hermenegild was perhaps not altogether uninfluenced by a desire to ingratiate himself with his fellow-countrymen, who, though they acknowledged him as the heir apparent, and recognised the general principle of hereditary succession in the royal family, had never scrupled to disregard it, when a departure from the rule was required by the interest of the nation. Recared, on the contrary, a crafty and designing youth, who already fostered a secret desire of supplanting his brother, affected a strict sanctity, and attached himself more particularly to the clergy, in order that he might

secure the influence of a body which under a supine monarch was daily acquiring an additional power in the state. Both these sons of Leovigild were the offspring of a former union, the reigning queen, Goisvintha, having been advanced in years when he married her. A bigot and a barbarian, with the vices of both their characters aggravated by age, she preferred Recared, on account of his apparent piety, to his elder brother; a predilection which she was often enabled to indulge from the domination she had obtained over her inert and sensual husband.

After the fatigues of the chase, and a protracted wassail with his comrades, Hermenegild, partially overcome by the fumes of wine, had wandered unaccompanied towards Toledo, forgetting that it would be impossible to gain admission into the town until the gates were opened at sunrise. Guided by the light of the moon, and shouting, occasional snatches of the last bacchanalian song he had heard, he reached the craggy and projecting base of the mountain on which the city was built, and in his endeavours to explore his way, strolled, as we have already described, into one of the open quarries with which that side of the rock was deeply perforated.

After several fruitless attempts at extrication, he was about to throw himself upon the ground

that he might sleep till daybreak, when he heard the sound of footsteps, and presently saw a figure emerging from the opposite extremity of the quarry, gazing cautiously around as it advanced. Hermenegild was shrouded in the deep shade of the rock, but by the light of the moon which at this moment fell brightly upon the stranger, he could perceive that she was a young female, of small though most symmetrical figure, and of much apparent beauty, in spite of the wan hue with which the moonlight blanched her naturally pale features. Her glossy black hair was braided on either side, disclosing the slender brows, overarching large dark eyes which might be termed soft and lustrous rather than sparkling. A half-aquiline nose and a mouth slightly drawn down at the corners imparted to her a certain air of dignity, although the predominant expression of her countenance was that of dejection, as if her natural character had been subdued by sickness or by sorrow. And yet, to judge by her habiliments, she had no reason to complain of fortune or of the station that she occupied. Her close boddice, admirably adapted to display the elegance of her form, was studded with jewels, the tiara that crowned her raven hair was radiant with diamonds and rubies, flashing in the moonlight; a rich mantel hung from her shoulders, and other

garments indicated the wealth and distinction of their wearer.

As he gazed on this apparition in utter amazement, the young prince repeatedly rubbed his eyes, for he found it difficult to believe their evidence. The female before him was a perfect stranger: a person of such apparent rank and opulence could not be an inhabitant of Toledo without his cognisance; and yet what foreign maiden, thus sumptuously attired, would be prowling alone and at this late hour, in purlieus so little safe or reputable as the quarries in the vicinity of the city? Astonishment and new impressions having in some degree banished the effects of his intoxication, he had already recognised the place to which he had strayed, but he was not sufficiently sobered to remain in his concealment, and watch the movements of the figure upon which his eyes were riveted.

At once fired by her attractive appearance, and stimulated by a desire to solve the mystery that seemed to surround her, he started suddenly forward, when she as instantly rushed back into the recesses of the place, uttering a half-suppressed cry as she disappeared. Quick as lightning he darted in pursuit of her, but the darkness occasioned by the overhanging crags, and the broken nature of the ground, compelled him to desist

before he could even form a conjecture as to the direction in which she had effected her inextricable retreat. For awhile he stood irresolute, doubtful whether to grope his way further with his hands, or return to the spot he had quitted; when a faint light, streaming through a chasm at the opposite extremity of the quarry, determined him to proceed. Not without considerable difficulty did he make his way to the spot, on reaching which, and on applying his eye to the narrow aperture, he beheld a spectacle that filled him with increased amazement.

Separated from him by only a narrow wall of rock, he saw a spacious excavation, fashioned at top into a rough irregular arch, from the centre of which a suspended lamp threw a dim light upon a numerous assemblage of both sexes, the greater part handsomely attired, the men being all armed with swords, and many of the females radiant with jewellery. At the moment when this vision was revealed to him, the parties within, coming forwards in divisions, kneeled before a small block of stone on the floor of the cavern, and kissed it with every demonstration of the most passionate devotion, uttering several sentences in an unknown tongue. While he was intently watching this singular exhibition, the female whom he had been pursuing burst into

the midst of the assemblage, addressing to them a few hurried words as she advanced. Their purport he could not understand,—for he had never heard the language in which they were spoken,—but their effect was electrical. Every sword was instantly torn from its scabbard; rage and indignation inflamed the countenances which had lately been mantled over with an expression of adoring zeal; even the females seemed to participate in the general wrath, and all rushed towards an opening in the opposite side of the cavern.

In vain did the fair unknown whom he had first seen endeavour, with extended arms and persuasive accents, to arrest their furious progress,—for such appeared to be the purport of her speech, though Hermenegild understood it not. Her companions, pushing her hastily aside, hurried from the vault with brandished weapons and menacing gestures, the lamp was suddenly extinguished, the young prince saw no more, though he could hear angry voices and eager footsteps in various directions around him.

Unable to comprehend a syllable of what he had heard, he was still not slow in divining its meaning. The female had informed her friends that a stranger had intruded upon their nocturnal assemblage, which he concluded to be of some guilty nature; and the participants in these un-

hallowed and stealthy rites had resolved, apparently, to sacrifice him upon the spot, lest he should make a public disclosure of what he had detected. Naturally brave, and restored by a sense of imminent danger to a full possession of his faculties, the prince placed his back to the rock, and wielding his battle-axe, resolved to sell his life as dearly as possible, since there seemed to be little chance that he should ultimately save it from the numerous assailants who would doubtless intercept his flight, even if he knew in what direction to attempt an escape.

A few minutes of most painful suspense elapsed, when his listening ear distinguished the sound of approaching footsteps, and he grasped his uplifted weapon with a firmer hold; again relaxing it, however, as he heard his name twice pronounced by a whispering voice that appeared to proceed from a woman. Upon this subject his doubts were presently dispelled: for the same young and richly-attired female whom he had first discovered, advancing from a near crag, looked anxiously around her, and again in a loud whisper called out his name. That she who had so lately fled from his presence in dismay, although she had evidently recognised him, should now be seeking him out, filled him with a suspicion that she only desired to decoy him into the hands of

her companions, and for some moments he stood irresolute how to act. Ashamed, however, of attempting to conceal himself from a solitary female, he stepped forward into the moonlight, exclaiming, "I am Prince Hermenegild!" upon which the stranger ran up to him, ejaculating in the Gothic language, although with a foreign accent, "Quick! quick! this way—this way! I come to save your life. Follow me—or you are a dead man!"

"And how do I know that it is not your purpose to betray, rather than to preserve me?" asked the prince.

"Betray you!" cried the stranger, as she drew herself up with a look of proud and reproachful indignation. "I am incapable of betraying any one. I have rather compromised myself than you, for I have led my friends to believe that you are on the opposite side of the rock. Once more I say, follow me as you would avoid quick destruction; and if you find that I beguile you into danger, strike me dead at your foot with your battle-axe!"

"Agreed," said the prince, "lead on!"

In an instant his companion had plunged into the dark labyrinths of the rock, followed by the prince, who, in spite of his youth and activity, found some difficulty in keeping pace with her as

she threaded the mazes of the place, or bounded from crag to crag with the agility of an antelope. More than once in the course of this intricate and rapid progress, Hermenegild had addressed questions to his conductress; but she made no reply, until upon emerging from a narrow pathway beset with fragments of stone and bushes, he heard a gushing sound, and saw water gleaming before him in the faint light of the waning moon, when she exclaimed, "You are now on the banks of the Tagus: turn to the left, and at the distance of a few hundred yards you will reach the bridge that crosses the high-road to Toledo, when you need not any longer fear pursuit. Reveal not what you have seen; and as you value the life which I have just saved, never attempt again— at least at night — to revisit these perilous haunts."

"Nay, fair stranger," said the prince, "we cannot part thus. I believe, indeed, that you have been my preserver, but I can neither guess what has prompted you to this generous interference, nor how I became personally known to you, since I cannot believe you to be an inhabitant of Toledo."

"These are secrets, prince, which I may not divulge. Suffice it to state that you once rendered me an inappreciable service; and that in

acting as I have done, I am only discharging a debt of gratitude."

"You amaze me more and more. Surely I can never have seen you, for had I once contemplated those beautiful features I could not have forgotten them. If such be your wish I will willingly promise never to obtrude myself further upon your acquaintance, but I would at least know the name and rank of her to whom I am indebted for my life, that she may not be forgotten in my prayers."

"Prince! you must remain in your present ignorance, if you would retain towards me the smallest feeling of respect or gratitude. Alas! were my name divulged, you would both detest and despise me." A deep sigh accompanied this declaration, and the eyes of the speaker were cast mournfully upon the ground.

"Is it possible," asked Hermenegild, in a tone of surprise and disappointment,—"is it possible that one so young, so lovely, and whose looks bespeak such perfect innocence, should be stained with dishonour, or be in any way an alien from virtue?"

A burning though evanescent blush reddened the pale cheek of the stranger, and her uplifted eyes flashed fire as she exclaimed, "You mistake me, prince, I am no daughter of shame, nor am I even sullied with an evil thought, although

you find me a wanderer in the quarries and a sharer in nocturnal mysteries. Were my name known, I repeat that you would scorn and loathe me; but it would be for that which, according to my estimation, constitutes my pride, my boast, my glory. It is best, therefore, for both of us that you should for ever remain in ignorance. Attempt not to follow me. Farewell! we meet no more."

"Stay for one moment, I conjure you," cried Hermenegild; but the stranger had already disappeared in the craggy brake, and he knew the inutility of attempting to overtake her in her rapid flight through the windings of the quarry, even if a feeling of gratitude and a sense of prudence had not withheld him from disobeying her injunctions. He therefore pursued his way along the banks of the river, lost in a thousand unavailing conjectures as to the real character and station of this singular being, whom he found habited like a princess, and yet consorting in those disreputable haunts with desperadoes evidently engaged in some lawless enterprise, since they would have murdered him for having detected their meeting.

Her declaration that he had formerly rendered her an important service, although he was confident he had never seen her, and the enigmatical

nature of her language at parting, involved the whole affair in an additional mystery, which he was still endeavouring to solve when he reached the bridge over the Tagus, and ascending the steps at its side, found himself upon the high road within a trifling distance from Toledo. By the time he arrived at the city, the rays of the morning sun had begun to gleam upon the silver cross of the flag that floated above the keep, when a trumpet was sounded by the warder on the watch, the gates were thrown open, the prince passed into the street, and mounting the steep ascent that led to the castle, entered the postern of the tower in which he usually slept.

CHAPTER II.

THE court of Leovigild was characterized by that intermediate state of manners which exhibits all the vices of civilization without any of the virtues of barbarism. No exterior polish varnished over the grossness of the Gothic aristocracy at Toledo, whose licentious habits and general immorality, from which the clergy themselves were only partially exempt, were rendered more conspicuously offensive by an affectation of sanctity, and a scrupulous attention to all the external forms of religion.

In his earlier days Leovigild had often started from the bare ground at sunrise to head his troops upon a march, or give the signal for an attack in which he himself was ever the foremost; but it was late in the morning we are now about to record, before he dragged himself from his bed of state, and being invested in his royal robes, was ushered

by numerous attendants in rich liveries, followed by his body-guard, into the banqueting-room of the castle, where his arrival was announced by a flourish of trumpets.

Upon the tables was spread a repast which, instead of corresponding to our modern notions of a breakfast, might rather be termed a sumptuous and abundant dinner, the savoury nature of which was attested by the fumes that filled the hall. Hermenegild, who had by this time slept away the effects of his intemperance and the fatigues of his night adventure, was already in attendance, awaiting the appearance of his royal father; Prince Recared was beside him, and round the lower end of the board stood Quintana, the Archbishop of Toledo, (who had attained that rank and secured high favour at court from his having embraced Arianism), together with such superior officers of the household as were privileged to sit at the royal table. Upon the king's entrance the whole party made the customary obeisance, but he took no notice of their salutation, his eyes and his attention being riveted to the outspread banquet, towards which he advanced with an accelerated step, and hastily seating himself, ejaculated, "Prayers!—Prayers!" bending his eager eyes upon the dish immediately before him, instead of regarding the archbishop to whom these words were addressed.

"Your Majesty is probably unaware that the queen has not yet made her appearance," said the prelate.

"The queen! the queen! why have they not summoned her? — Why does she not come?" asked the king impatiently. "Upon any other occasion I could gladly excuse her presence, but impunctuality at meals is monstrous. This spiced peacock, my favourite dish, will be spoilt if suffered to become cold; so prythee begin the prayers, good father, without delay."

Anxious to obey the king, and yet afraid of offending the queen, the prelate remained standing with his irresolute looks directed towards the door, when Hermenegild, seating himself at the table, exclaimed, "A brave Goth, ever as forward at a feast as at a fray, will commence the attack without awaiting the presence of a woman or the word of command from any one." So saying, he plunged his dagger into a smoking kid, and seizing its leg with his left hand, began to cut it up.

"Always impetuous, my brave son," said the king, "but you are wrong, very wrong. You might have disregarded the absence of the queen, but to touch meat before it has been sanctified by the offices of religion, and in the presence too of the good bishop, is a grave offence."

"When I have satisfied my hunger I will make

atonement," replied the prince, filling his mouth as he spoke.

"Heaven forbid that I should act thus disrespectfully, either towards our royal mother, or the illustrious and reverend chief minister of our religion!" exclaimed Recared, at the same time stooping to the crucifix at the archbishop's girdle, and kissing it most devoutly, an act of reverence for which he received a blessing in return.

"Prayers! prayers!" again shouted the king in a tone that showed he would not brook any longer delay, and the archbishop, who knew that he was stubborn and imperious where his appetites were concerned, however pliable upon all other occasions, hastened to obey his mandate. When the benedictions and thanksgiving were completed, all seemed eager to make up for the precious time they had thus lost, except Recared, who declared that he would touch nothing until the queen's vacant chair should be occupied. Even the archbishop thought it unnecessary for a hungry man to be thus ceremonious, for he began a vigorous assault upon a roasted pig, which he declared to be the most orthodox of all viands, since its mastication and deglutition evinced a proper horror of the superstitions of Judaism.

Cups, cans, and silver-mounted horns were soon put in requisition, the king setting the example by

calling for his tulip, a capacious golden vessel in the shape of that flower, which he filled with Cantabrian wine, and emptying it at a draught, confessed that he felt himself more than repaid for the troublesome conquest of that province, since it supplied so generous a liquor for his morning repast, although with his dinner he preferred the stronger produce of the Catalonian grape. At this moment the queen entered the hall, followed by a suite of female attendants and household officers, her malignant gray eye flaring with indignation when she perceived that the meal had been commenced without awaiting her arrival.

"Your royal predecessor would not have offered me this insult," she exclaimed, in a shrill voice, as she bent her sour and menacing features upon the king.

"Because you never presumed to keep Athanagild waiting for his meals," was the reply.

"Presumed!" screamed the queen, in a still sharper key, and as her rising passion became ungovernable, she poured contemptuous epithets upon her husband, which our respect for crowned heads prohibits us from recording. Leovigild, as we have already hinted, was authoritative at his meals, and being now imboldened by the contents of his ample tulip-cup, he descended to an undignified altercation, which was rendered still more derogatory to the royal disputants by the presence

of the king's sons, the metropolitan pontiff, and many of the palace officers and attendants. During this war of words the gluttonous monarch had not ceased to prosecute his repast, an example followed by his eldest son, who only stopped occasionally to indulge a coarse laugh whenever his father was successful in his retorts upon the queen. Recared, who had preserved a cautious silence, and neutrality during the dispute, was the first to appease the anger of the latter, by reminding her that he had been the only one to await her arrival, and to refrain from food, a mark of respect and duty which she acknowledged with complacent approbation, while she fiercely vituperated Hermenegild for his indecent greediness, which she said he had inherited from his father, and even ventured to rebuke the archbishop, although in much more measured language, for indulging his appetite, to the forgetfulness of all the courtesy and reverence due to his royal mistress.

Deeming a falsehood better than a loss of favour, the reverend delinquent protested his belief that it had been the queen's intention to take breakfast in her own apartment, endeavouring at the same time, to reinstate himself in her good graces, by studiously selecting and placing before her the dishes to which he knew her to be the most partial. This unlucky sedulity proved, however, to be rather an

aggravation of his offence, for Goisvintha, although totally deficient in meekness, and indeed in most of the essentials of Christianity, was a rigid stickler for the minutest observances it enjoined, and she was proportionably scandalized at being solicited to break her fast before she had gone through the customary religious formula. "Prayers have been already said," observed the prelate as he filled his mouth.

"But not in my presence, nor have I joined in any of the responses. You remember how the voracious and irreverent Joamiena was choked by a pomegranate for tasting it before a thanksgiving had been pronounced by the priest."

"But these viands have already been sanctified, and I will be a guarantee against any similar judgment."

Nothing, however, would satisfy the royal scruples but a repetition of the prayers, which the archbishop hurried over with a rapidity proportioned to his desire to finish the roast pig before it became quite cold. His second performance of the ceremony won no attention except from the queen and the sanctimonious Recared, the rest of the party despatching their meal with as much noise and eagerness as if the pious prelate were discussing the merits of the repast instead of offering up a thanksgiving to its divine donor. Goisvintha and Recared now partook freely of the viands and

wines, which appeared to have a pacifying influence upon the peevish temper of the former; while the king, being no longer irritated by hunger and thirst, sunk into his habitual apathy, and seemed quite willing that his consort should resume her customary domination.

Hermenegild, too, who in spite of his undaunted character and bluff demeanour, entertained a superstitious dread of offending the clergy, or of neglecting the smallest ceremonial of religion, being now prompted to repentance by a full stomach, took the prelate aside, and reminding him that he had promised to make atonement for tasting food before prayers had been said, placed a purse in his hand, requesting that its contents might be appropriated towards gilding the statue of St. James in the great cathedral. Assurance being given that this expiatory offering would cancel the offence, both parties returned to the table; where the circulation of the wine-cup, in which all equally participated, diffused a good humour seldom preserved for any length of time in the disunited family of the Spanish king.

Hermenegild, rendered communicative by his potations, and forgetting or disregarding the request of his fair liberator that he would not divulge what he had seen in the quarry, related his overnight's adventure, which arrested the attention of his

auditors, and elicited various marks of amazement, until the queen exclaimed, with a look of contemptuous incredulity, "Tush! do you think we are to be cajoled by such idle tales? You were intoxicated, as you generally are after your hunting-parties; you wandered into the quarry, fell asleep, and saw the whole of this marvellous spectacle in a dream."

"It must be so, my son," said the king; "it is impossible that there should have been any reality in your vision, for how, or why, should jewelled women and richly-attired men, all unknown to you by sight, and yet, as you would infer, inhabitants of Toledo, congregate in arms upon such a spot, and at such an hour, and, above all, why should they seek your life? When you have drunken to excess, you should ever betake yourself to your bed, as I do; but why do you thus constantly waste your days in hunting the stag and the wild boar?"

"Because you give me no other perils to encounter; no other war to wage. Commence hostilities against the Romans, as the degenerate subjects of the Greek emperor still affect to call themselves. Suffer me to command your army, and I will pledge myself to drive them from the towns and castles which they still retain upon the coasts of the sea."

"And what if you succeed? Shall we obtain more rich and luscious wine than we can now command? any fish, flesh, or fowl more delicate than those which are now placed upon our table?"

"Perhaps not; but we shall taste the joys of the battle; we shall shake off this inglorious sloth; we shall be covered with glory, and you will then indeed merit the appellation of king of Spain."

"And enjoy the pleasure of expelling or exterminating heretical enemies," observed the queen.

"Whereby you will secure not only an earthly, but a celestial and immortal crown," added the archbishop.

"I am too old for the joys of the battle," said the king. "I am king of Spain already, and, since we are to win no new luxuries, if we succeed, while failure would deprive us of those which we already possess, it is surely our wisest policy to preserve peace. How say you, my son, Recared, you are wont to be considerate and cautious?"

"It ill becomes me to offer an opinion in the presence of those who are so much more competent to decide," was the wary answer of the prince.

At this juncture the archbishop, who had prevailed upon the indolent Leovigild to make him prime minister, as well as pontiff, was summoned from the hall to open some despatches just received

from France. After he had been a short time absent, he returned with a smiling countenance, and, laying the papers before the king, informed him that he would be well pleased with their contents. "I shall be still better pleased, if I am spared the trouble of reading them," replied the monarch. "They relate, I presume, to the affair of Ingundis; does the French king give his consent to the match?"

"He does, and we are here apprized that the young princess is already on her way to Toledo, so that you will now, doubtless, think it right to communicate the whole affair to Prince Hermenegild."

"Perfectly right; but I cannot abide long speeches, which are terribly apt to parch the mouth. Wherefore, I will beg you, good father, to be my spokesman on the occasion, and, when you have concluded, you shall moisten your tongue with a draught of this potent Catalonian." The prelate bowed, emptied the cup before him, and, after two or three expectorations, for he was of a somewhat phlegmatic habit, thus addressed the prince:—"Until we were sure of its success, we would not apprize your highness of a negotiation which we have opened with Sigibert, king of Austrasia, having for its object a marriage between Ingundis, his young and beautiful daughter,

and yourself. In this proceeding it has been the wish of your royal father not only to secure the happiness of his eldest son and destined successor, but that of the whole nation. After long and destructive hostilities, the Franks and the Visigoths at length enjoy a peace which it is our object to perpetuate by this auspicious alliance, and to cement the two nations together in the double ties of consanguinity. Ingundis, as the grand-daughter of queen Goisvintha, is already entitled to your affection, even were she not sure to command your warmest love by her youth, beauty, and accomplishments."

The prelate paused, hemmed, and applied the promised cup of Catalonian wine to his lips, an opportunity of which the queen availed herself to exclaim, "Ingundis is the daughter of my daughter, but, ere this marriage be celebrated, which is to give me a double claim of maternity, she must abjure the accursed errors of the Tritheists and Consubstantialists, and embrace Arianism. Were it to be otherwise, I had rather stab her to the heart with my own hand, than assist in uniting Hermenegild to a heretic. Her tender age, for she is only in her fifteenth year,* gives me assur-

* Gibbon, on the authority of Mariana, the historian of Spain, states the Merovingian Princess to have been only thirteen years of age when she was betrothed to Hermenegild.

ance of easy success in effecting her conversion, which has been my only object in assenting to the alliance."

"And a worthy one too," observed the archbishop, "for, in redeeming the souls of others, we secure our own salvation. Accursed be the Catholics!"

"Amen!" ejaculated the queen, crossing herself with great devotion.

"If the princess be young and beautiful," cried Hermenegild, "we shall not quarrel about her faith. She will, doubtless, have a dower proportioned to her rank, and I consent to receive her as my bride."

"Then we need say nothing more at present, since business always fatigues me," drawled the king, rising from the table. "Come, my brave boy, lend me your arm, for there are tumblers and jugglers from Greece waiting for us in the armoury, and some Italians, famous for performing the sword dance, though I would wager my dappled mule that you could beat them at their own pastime." And so saying he quitted the hall, leaning upon his favourite son, and followed by the queen and the rest of the party, who, in the general inaptitude for more rational entertainment, were all equally delighted at the prospect of seeing tumblers and mountebanks.

At the end of the armoury was a raised platform, upon which, chairs being placed for the royal circle and the courtiers, they took their seats, and the performances began with the tumblers, whose gestures and attitudes were, at times, any thing rather than decorous. Such, however, was the prevalent grossness of manners, that these improprieties, instead of being discountenanced, were encouraged by bursts of laughter, in which both sexes participated; while jokes were launched in the hearing of royal ears which would now be scarcely tolerated in the booth of an itinerant Merry Andrew.

Two Grecian jugglers, who next displayed the wonders of their art, were by no means equally successful; for, although their first exhibitions, which were merely sleight of hand, excited rapturous bursts of applause, their subsequent deceptions became so marvellous and incomprehensible as to startle the spectators. That anything which could puzzle and confound a whole court-circle, including an archbishop, should be the result of simple legerdemain and unassisted human agency, seemed to be utterly impossible. The prelate, when called upon for an explanation of the apparent miracles enacted before his eyes, whispered his suspicion that the performers must be leagued with some of the powers of darkness;

whereat the queen started up in great horror, protesting she would witness no more of their devilry, and adding that if the wretches were not actual dabblers in the black art, they were, at all events, Greeks, and consequently heretics, whose mysterious dealings it became not good Christians to behold and encourage. Recared suggested that the parties might be committed to prison, and examined, or put to the question, on the following day; and the king being willing to consent to any thing, provided his further amusements were not interrupted, the unlucky jugglers were seized by the guard, and thrown into one of the castle dungeons.

On the next morning the archbishop, with some of his clergy, proceeded to interrogate them. From such judges little justice was to be expected, for the priesthood found the trade of manufacturing fictitious miracles far too profitable and important to allow its exercise by the laity, even in appearance. In vain did the terrified conjurors explain the whole process of their thaumaturgicks; they were solemnly pronounced guilty of diabolism, but permitted, as a special act of clemency, to depart from the city on their giving to the shrine of St. James all the money they had accumulated during their wanderings through France and Spain, and solemnly pledging themselves to de-

part from the dominions of Leovigild without again exercising their unholy calling.

After the arrest of the jugglers, the Italian sword-dancers commenced their perilous performance, which afforded great delight to all except Hermenegild, who declared aloud that they were sorry bunglers, and, snatching a weapon, leaped into the midst of them. Not less adroit than the most skilful of the party, superior to them all in strength and stature, and discharging his fierce blows rather as a combatant than an actor, he disarmed one of the performers, and grievously wounded a second, who was borne bleeding into an ante-room, amid the loud acclamations of the royal circle, and especially of the king, who repeatedly exclaimed, "My brave boy! my brave boy! Ah! you should see how he lays about him on the field of battle."

Finding that the remainder of the dancers refused to compete with him any longer, or to convert their exhibition into a fight, Hermenegild, pointing to an old statue of some Roman general, which had been suffered to remain at the furthest extremity of the armoury, offered five pieces of gold to him who should strike it by hurling the battle-axe which he drew from his belt for the purpose. The distance was considerable, and although the mark was of some magnitude, it was

missed in succession by every one of the Italians. From the strong and practised hand of the prince, however, the weapon flew whizzing through the air, and struck the head of the statue with such violence that it chipped off a large fragment of the marble. A shout of triumph burst from the lips of the assailant, as he exclaimed, "Thus do the Goths dispose of Roman generals, though I had always rather encounter mine enemy hand to hand. Missiles of all sorts, and more especially arrows and javelins are the coward's weapons. I like to feel that I inflict my wounds: there is little pleasure in committing them to the winds."

Still louder than before did the courtiers applaud the prince's skill: Leovigild affectionately embracing him, called him his brave boy twenty times over; when, as there was now nothing further to be exhibited, the whole party dispersed themselves to pursue their respective pleasures and employments.

On quitting the presence of the queen the archbishop retired to his *palace*, for not only had the successors of the meek and lowly apostles already arrogated this royal title for their dwellings, but they affected in all things a regal pomp, crowned themselves with the mitre, and when installed in the episcopal office termed it their enthronization. Deep as was the horror he had feigned when once

told by Goisvintha that she had held discourse and dealings with a Jew, he had scarcely been ten minutes in his palace when he was closeted and in earnest conference with Balthazar, a rich Israelite, who had been secretly admitted into the mansion.

The large revenues derived from his church were inadequate to meet the vast expenses of the archbishop, who had not only to support an immense establishment at Toledo, but maintained several pleasure houses and hunting establishments in the country. In the former his pomp and state were glossed over, although but thinly, with a superficial decorum; but when residing at the latter, he abandoned himself without restraint to a dissolute indulgence and extravagance, which soon plunged him into pecuniary difficulties. From Balthasar he had already borrowed several considerable sums, luring him to these advances by solemn promises to extend the commercial privileges of his tribe, and to remove some of the degrading penalties and disabilities with which they were stigmatized. It was the object of his present interview to extort an additional loan, which he obtained by the same means; having succeeded in which purpose, he arrayed himself in all the splendour of his pontifical robes, sparkling with jewellery, and hastened to the cathedral for the performance of the Friday's service.

Recared betook himself to the same sacred edifice, where his pharisaical demeanour was calculated to win him a reputation for peculiar sanctity from all those who were unacquainted with his real character. His brother was not present, a circumstance to which he drew the special attention of the queen, regretting the disrespect it evinced, and expressing a fear, as he sighed and shook his head, that the absentee was pursuing some of his usual wild and dissolute courses. The courtiers, both male and female, though they lived mostly in a state of open licentiousness, were punctual in their attendance at the house of worship. Many were steeped to the very teeth in depravity and corruption, but few indeed were so far gone as to be absent from prayers on a Friday.

CHAPTER III.

HAUNTED by the recollection of his last night's adventure, and more especially of his fair liberator, whose pale and dejected, but still beautiful and winning features were ever present to his mental eye, Hermenegild hastened from the palace to the quarries, regardless of the injunctions he had received, and of the perils with which he had been menaced, should he venture to explore those forbidden haunts. With his faithful battle-axe in his girdle he was not accustomed to shrink from enemies or dangers of any sort; and having been moreover piqued by the queen's taunts and incredulity, he was resolved at all hazards to attempt an immediate elucidation of the mystery.

His remembrance of the localities was not very distinct, but upon turning off at the bridge, and coursing the banks of the Tagus for some distance,

he clearly recognised the opening into the craggy brake along which he had passed with his conductress. It led, as he had conjectured, into the quarries which he explored in every direction, fancying at times that he remembered some of the passages; but all his exertions to discover the vaulted enclosure wherein he had detected the armed strangers proved utterly unavailing. In vain did he search for the footsteps wherewith such an assemblage might be expected to mark the ground in their retreat, or examine the crags over which they might be supposed to have scrambled. Nothing whatever could be discerned that might prate of their whereabout, nor could he perceive a single living object in all those dreary purlieus, except a solitary stork upon the highest fragment of rock, and a few scattered goats perched upon such crags and ledges as offered a patch of herbage, who, after gazing at him with a look of momentary wonderment, returned quietly to their browzing, and ceased to notice him.

Wearied with his fruitless perquisition, he strolled back to the city, resolved, however, to return at night to conceal himself carefully, and watch for any manifestations that might dispel the mystery in which the affair was at present involved. This purpose he executed, but his vigils were as unsuccessful as his morning's scrutiny. No sound met

his ear save the hooting of the owls who had formed their nests in the dark recesses of the place, nothing moved around him during the whole tedious night except a few flitting bats.

At sunrise, he retraced his steps towards the city, vexed at having taken so much trouble to so little purpose, and seeking another clue to discovery by endeavouring to recall upon what young female he had ever, in the course of his latter life, conferred an important benefit. No such incident was furnished by his memory, and his mortification was rendered more poignant by the coarse raillery of the court-circle, several of whom, and more especially the queen, twitted him as a dealer in marvellous tales, and asked him whether he had seen another fair incognita in his drunken slumbers. The reveries of the day influencing the dreams of the night, his unknown preserver was so often presented to him, and the whole scene of the quarry reproduced, as to persuade him at length that he has been deceived in the first instance, either by the phantasies of an intoxicated brain, or by a vision of sleep. Under the influence of this belief the occurrence gradually lost its hold of his imagination, a process accelerated by the busy preparations now making for the reception of the Merovingian princess, whose arrival was shortly expected.

Although it combined all the regal, ecclesiastical, and military pomp which the Visi-Gothic king could command, the pageant exhibited upon this occasion displayed a rude and ostentatious magnificence rather than any portion of elegance or consistency. On account of the steepness of the streets, which would hardly admit the safe passage of carriages to or from the castle, it had been arranged that the procession should advance to meet the bride at a trifling distance from the north gate, where she herself and such of her attendants as travelled in vehicles were to alight, and to be escorted with all honour to the palace. At a friendly meeting of Visigoths and Franks, especially upon such a joyous occasion, it is needless to state that a banquet upon a grand scale was deemed the most important part of the whole ceremonial. To this department Leovigild devoted his entire attention, being roused from his customary inertness by the deep interest which he took in any thing appertaining to gastronomics.

Such of the previously prepared dishes as required any peculiar nicety in their concoction were tasted by himself, for he boasted of a superior accuracy of palate, and he had dictated a list, since he liked writing as little as he excelled in it, of the rare wines that were to be placed upon the board. Hermenegild took the command and di-

rection of the royal guard; Recared marshalled the household and the officers of state; the queen ferretted out every jewel and ornament in her possession, only puzzled where to find room for such a jumble of finery upon a figure so insignificant; while the archbishop resolved that his state and splendour should emulate, or even eclipse, that of the monarch, not only employed for that purpose all that he could command of his own resources, but even borrowed from the shrines of his cathedral some of their most precious ornaments.

A horseman, who had been stationed on a neighbouring eminence, having galloped into the city to announce the near approach of Ingundis and her escort, the procession which had been kept in readiness for such a summons, set out to meet her. At its head was the royal carriage, a species of open car, mostly composed of ivory, drawn by four richly caparisoned white mules harnessed abreast. Within it were seated the king and queen, the former presenting a singular compound of military equipment with effeminate finery. His gothic half-armour, his sword, and even the javelin that he held were enriched with jewels; while his gorgeous mantle fashioned like a woman's, and the feathers in his flat cap, contributed to derogate from the manliness of his appearance. Neither

his own family nor the guard were suffered to come immediately after the royal carriage, for that post of honour was arrogated as a recognised right by the archbishop. Seated in an open vehicle drawn by four dappled mules of singular size and beauty, the prelate, swelling with a consciousness of his own splendour, evidently challenged a comparison with the king. His robes, mitre, and crosier were profusely studded with precious stones, and every finger sparkled with rings, which he took care to display by extending his hands in benediction to the Arian portion of the populace, who fell upon their knees as he passed; an act of homage which was refused by the Catholics, who hated him for his apostacy from their faith.

Recared, with some of the queen's attendants, the officers of the palace, and the inferior members of the household, followed the archbishop. To them succeeded the clergy, the choir, and the whole establishment of the cathedral, almost as numerous as a little army, bearing in front the image of St. James, as large as life, together with various chalices, gold and silver vessels, consecrated relics, and whatever could contribute to the solemnity as well as the gorgeousness of the spectacle. Lastly came Prince Hermenegild, at the head of the guard, wearing the golden armlet, and the small silver horse in his hemlet, which attested

his rank and nation, but in all other respects equipped as a plain Gothic soldier; his inseparable battle-axe being stuck in his girdle, and his sword hanging by an iron chain. In this unadorned but strictly martial costume, his fine figure appeared to much greater advantage than if it had been encumbered with more costly trappings; while his manly and unembarrassed deportment invested him with a natural grace, which Recared, whose demeanour was always studied and artificial, could never attain.

The guards had reached the lower part of the city, and the prince was just turning his horse towards the north gate, when a figure crossed the street, which instantly transfixed him with astonishment. It was the identical female whom he had first seen in the quarry, who had so often been presented to him in his subsequent dreams! Her face having been turned fully towards him he could not possibly be mistaken. The braided tresses of black, the soft lustre of the large rich dark eyes, the pale but sweet beauty, and the countenance of blended dignity and dejection, left not a doubt of her identity, although her menial occupation and habiliments, so totally at variance with her former splendour, scarcely allowed him to trust the evidence of his senses.

Of the humblest and coarsest materials, but

still arranged with neatness, her garments imparted to their wearer a character of respectability struggling with poverty; her uncovered head was exposed to the fierce rays of the sun; and her delicate form was bent on one side by the weight of a large pitcher filled with water. It was evident to the prince that she had recognised him, for a sudden blush reddened her wan cheek, her eyes were rapidly averted, and she hurried as fast as her load would allow her down an obscure street, inhabited by the lowest and most wretched of the people.

Hermenegild's first impulse was to throw himself from his horse and pursue her, from which he was only withheld by a recollection of the conspicuous part he was acting in the eyes of the whole city, and of the injurious constructions which would be put upon such a procedure at the moment when he was going out to meet his affianced wife. Involuntarily he checked his horse, but it was urged forwards by the others, the strange female had disappeared almost as soon as seen, all endeavours to reach her, in the then crowded state of the streets, seemed to be utterly hopeless, and he could only make the most eager inquiries whether she were known to any of his companions.

Some had not noticed her at all; to the few who had cast their eyes upon her she was a com-

plete stranger; and all were surprised at the great anxiety of their leader respecting a personage who appeared to be so humble and unimportant. Having, therefore, no alternative but to proceed, Hermenegild passed out of the gate, deaf to the clangour of the military music and the shouts of the people, and unconscious of the whole gay and glittering pageant in which he was a principal personage, his thoughts being entirely engrossed by the unexpected vision he had seen, and in conjectures as to the change not less melancholy than marvellous, which had reduced her from her former state of distinction to an apparently servile condition. From this reverie he was not thoroughly aroused till the halting of the cavalcade, the clangour of trumpets, and the mutual shouts of gratulation apprized him that the escort of the princess was in sight, when a new curiosity took possession of his mind, and he hurried his horsemen impatiently forward, to the momentary derangement of the procession, in order so obtain an earlier view of his destined bride.

The train that accompanied Ingundis was much more worthy in its composition, and formidable in its numbers than her lover had anticipated. In those unsettled times when might generally constituted right, and the law was seldom obeyed where it could not be immediately enforced, Si-

gibert, her father, would not entrust her safety, especially during such a long journey, and with a marriage portion of considerable value, to an inefficient escort. A strong troop of well-armed Frankish horsemen accompanied her, and a train of heterogeneous carts and waggons followed in their suite. A tent was provided for her occasional accommodation at night, but in bad weather she slept in an enormous waggon, or rather house upon wheels, not altogether dissimilar from those of our travelling showmen in the present day, though much more cumbersome in its construction.

She had performed the greater part of her journey on horseback, and at the time of encountering the procession from Toledo she was mounted upon a stately steed, which she seemed to have perfectly at command, four of her attendants holding over her head a richly-decorated baldaquin or canopy. Profuse tresses, reaching down to the saddle, attested her descent from the long-haired Merovingian kings; though not fair, nor yet peculiarly feminine, her face was handsome, and there was an elevated character of firmness and decision in its expression, rather in accordance with her helmet-shaped hat, and her boddice fashioned like a soldier's cuirass, than with her gentle sex, and the extreme tenderness of her years.

Salutations were mutually exchanged by gesture, but verbal greeting was for some time rendered impossible by the noise of the cathedral choristers shouting a hymn which asserted, in no very measured terms, the superiority of the Arian over the Catholic doctrine. This most discourteous welcome had been suggested to the archbishop by the fanatical Goisvintha, who joined her own discordant scream to the choir. Fortunately, however, for all parties, the Frankish horsemen, who would have resented any imputation upon their faith much more fiercely than a personal insult, did not catch the meaning of the hymn, and received as a compliment that which might well have been deemed a studied offence.

Hermenegild, as soon as his words were audible, congratulated the princess on her safe arrival, declaring that her beauty and appearance exceeded his utmost expectations, since he saw by her gallant bearing and her skilful management of so fiery a steed, that she was well qualified to become a soldier's wife.

"I desire no higher honour," replied Ingundis, who in spite of her youth, and the total novelty of the scene, seemed to be preserved from the smallest embarrassment by a consciousness of her own rank and dignity. Her lover, ever proud of his soldiers, made the guard defile before her,

asking her opinion of their appearance and equipment. "They are well fitted for parade," was the reply, "but they seem to me too spruce and dainty for a hard day's fighting. Look at our Frankish horsemen, you may see by the dust with which they are covered that they have had a fatiguing march in a hot sun, and yet I would wager the most precious of my relics that an equal number of yours could not stand against them, were they now opposed to each other."

"By St. James! I desire nothing better than to try," exclaimed the prince, pressing his horse with his knees, and snatching the battle-axe from his belt.

"Nay, we came hither to make marriage, not war," said the princess smiling. "I told you my opinion, because I never conceal it, and to say sooth, I see but one man among your troop who realizes my notion of a proper Gothic warrior."

"And who may that be?"

"Yourself:" replied Ingundis, surveying him with as much calmness as if she were merely giving her opinion of his horse.

"Thanks for the compliment," cried the prince; "and may I perish! if I have ever seen a damsel who seems better fitted for a warrior's bride than the brave and beautiful Ingundis."

Goisvintha had by this time hobbled up to her

grandaughter, scowling in her face as she croaked. "Bah!—Brunechild, your mother, was much handsomer than you, when she was as young; but *she* was an Arian." In the same courteous strain would she have proceeded, had she not been interrupted by the advance of Chilpert, the chamberlain of the Austrasian monarch, who came forward with his chief attendants to be presented to Leovigild, by whom he was cordially greeted and welcomed to Toledo. "I understand, Sir Chamberlain," said the king, "that you commanded the princess's escort, and as I gave strict orders to my chatelains and governors of provinces, for your friendly reception, and the furnishing of your supplies, I trust you encountered few difficulties on the road."

"None that we could not surmount," was the reply; "thanks to our swords in some instances, and to our money in others. What orders your Majesty may have issued, I know not; but we have had to negotiate or to struggle with twenty different kings before we reached Toledo, for every petty chatelain deems himself the monarch of his own district. We soon found it necessary to avoid the castles,* from whose commanders we had expected protection and assistance. Some issued out upon

* The great number of its castles imparted its name to the extensive kingdom of Castile.

us with evident purpose to make slaves of us, and prey of our convoy, had we not shown ourselves both able and willing to fight in its defence. More than once, if we would avoid a battle, were we compelled to go several miles out of our way and cross a bridge, in order that we might pay a toll to its lord: and in almost every instance have we been obliged to purchase our provisions from men of rank, when we might have obtained them at half-price from the farmers. Every fresh province extorted from us some new tax, and in spite of our vigilant watch and ward, both by night and day, we lost a baggage waggon and three horses, not stolen from us by any of the peasant rabble; but, as we have good reason to know, by the scouts and retainers of different chatelains."

"A baggage waggon!" cried the king; "I hope it did not contain any part of the princess's portion. And by-the-by, what does it consist of, where is it? In these waggons, I suppose. I am sorry you were so unceremoniously treated on your journey, but no king can prevent these little irregularities; and as my chatelains and lieutenants are always ready, when I summon them and their followers, to march against my enemies, I can hardly blame them for taking a little liberty with my friends. But the portion—the portion! let us see it; let us know what it is worth."

As Hermenegild, and indeed the whole court seemed to participate in this eager and not very delicate curiosity, the chamberlain professed his readiness to gratify it. A considerable part of the dower consisted of slaves, chained to the waggons to prevent their escape, and bearing evident marks by their bruises and sickly looks of the severe jolting or overturns they had sustained. Their treatment indeed had scarcely been so humane as that extended to the beasts that drew them, and yet they were represented as skilful artisans and useful handicraftsmen of various sorts. One who had been selected for his culinary proficiency, excited the special attention of Leovigild, who loosened his chain with his own hand, observing that the professor of a noble art ought not to be confounded with vulgar mechanics.

Of specie there was only a very small quantity, but there was an abundance of curiously wrought arms and armour, some rich dresses and stuffs, several couple of large and rare staghounds, as many cast of valuable hawks, with two experienced falconers, well skilled to teach their art, which had now attained high favour throughout the greater part of Europe. Among various other articles needless to enumerate, there was a box of amulets and charms, mostly made of glass, which professed by the signs or words

wherewith they were inscribed, to preserve their wearers against almost all evils, ordinary or supernatural. It had been intended, as a special and inappreciable favour to add one of the thorns wherewith our Saviour had been crowned, and some filings from a nail used in his crucifixion; but the Catholic clergy would not suffer such invaluable relics to pass into the possession of the Arians. In lieu of them they transmitted a Latin Bible, with notes and comments by a learned monk, pointing out the incontestible truth of the Catholic tenets, and the folly, falsehood, and diabolical wickedness of Arianism. Had Goisvintha been aware of this fact she might have been furnished with some excuse for the insulting hymn she had suggested.

Many of these commodities had been unceremoniously dragged out of the waggons, for the purpose of being examined and overhauled by the royal circle and their attendants, whose disparaging observations, made in the hearing of the princess, were something more creditable to the frankness than to the courtesy of the speakers. Leovigild was the first to give the signal for returning to Toledo, observing that the banquet would be ready by the time they reached the castle, and that he was too hungry to waste another hour in unloading waggons and examin-

ing bundles. Mounting his vehicle, he accordingly desired the driver to hasten back to the city, paying no heed to the order of the procession which was quite deranged by his precipitate retreat.

Divining his majesty's object, and never wishing to be the last at a feast, the archbishop hurried after him; the others, having both regal and episcopal authority for quitting their ranks, speeded back in the same direction; so that the return to Toledo resembled a tumultuous flight, rather than an orderly procession. Hermenegild, however, did not quit the side of the princess, whose progress was necessarily slow on account of the canopy bearers; the gothic guards maintained their post in the rear; the Franks having hastily reloaded the waggons, followed at an easy distance; and the whole cavalcade at length passed the city gates. On reaching the spot where he had previously caught a glimpse of his mysterious incognita, the prince cast his searching eyes down the miserable street in which she had disappeared, but without discerning any figure that in the least resembled the object of his quest. Having given orders for stationing the waggons and vehicles in the lower part of the town, where a detachment of the guard was left for their protection,

the prince accompanied by the princess, and followed by their respective attendants, ascended the steep street, and passing through the great gates, they made their way, not without difficulty, into the confused, crowded, and disorderly court-yard of the castle.

CHAPTER IV.

DURING the residence of the Franks at Toledo, the court wallowed in a perpetual festival, and Leovigild, who as he put in requisition the talents of his foreign cook, felt himself in a congenial element, became animated with a rare activity. Of the revelling, drunkenness, and riot;—of the frequent brawls, battles, and reconciliations! of the military sports, the exhibitions of tumblers, mountebanks, and buffoons; of the gambling, dancing, and intriguing, intermixed with the strict and regular performance of religious offices, it is not our purpose to speak. An union of grossness, profligacy, and superstition characterised these orgies, which lasted during several days. Chilpert the Frankish chamberlain, as well as his fellow countrymen, imagined that they were to have witnessed the marriage ceremony; but Gois-

vintha assured them that it was never intended to be celebrated until the anniversary of the feast of St. John, when Ingundis would complete her fifteenth year; adding that this arrangement had been assented to by Sigibert, her royal father. As they had no reason for mistrusting this statement, and had placed the princess in the safe custody of her own grandmother, the Franks, only regretting that their orders forbade them to prolong their stay, departed from Toledo, encountering less hostility from their Gothic friends in returning, than they had done in advancing, simply because they were without a convoy, and did not present so tempting a bait to the Chatelains and other lordly freebooters.

Hermenegild's participation in these festivities, though his inebriation once led him into a fierce encounter with a powerful Frank, whom he struck to the ground and wounded, did not lower him in the opinion of Ingundis, who had been too much used to such scenes at her father's court to deem them derogatory.

In his attentions to herself, even when his reason was half drowned in wine, he had never been deficient; she admired his bluff, honest, bold character, not less than his handsome features and manly form; and deemed herself fortunate that the husband, to whom she had been betrothed,

without ever having seen him, should prove to be one whom she would herself have selected for the object of her affections. Nor was the prince less smitten with his affianced wife. Youth and personal charms, though he had not been hitherto accustomed to look beyond such allurements, did not constitute her sole attraction, for her frank disposition and resolute mind, so congenial with his own, while it afforded him present delight, gave him assurance of their future agreement, as well as of her fitness for the royal station to which she would be ultimately elevated. Such being their mutual feelings, corroborated by every day's fresh intercourse, it may well be supposed that both equally regretted the deferment of their nuptials, for a reason of which they could not perceive the force, or even the meaning.

Goisvintha, in fact, had not assigned her real motive, which was an obstinate determination to postpone the marriage until Ingundis should have been converted to the Arian faith. To her wishes upon this subject, backed by the persuasions of her colleague, the archbishop, Leovigild yielded a pliant assent; and the queen, proud of her polemical abilities, undertook the task of proselytism, in spite of the objections of Quintana, who claimed this duty as the prerogative of his episcopal office. At his earnest suggestion, for he knew the violent

character of his coadjutrix, she consented to employ argument, persuasion, and even blandishments in the first instance; always reserving to herself the right, or, as she termed it, the imperative duty of using compulsion, should it become ultimately necessary. When her fanatical feelings were once excited, the royal bigot was not likely to procrastinate.

Chilpert and his Franks were scarcely out of sight of Toledo, ere she betook herself to her grandaughter's apartment, and with much hypocritical wheedling, regretted a difference of faith, which in all probability would not only destroy the happiness of the projected marriage, but entail eventual misery and civil war upon the whole kingdom. "Why then did you solicit my hand for Hermenegild, knowing that I was a catholic?" asked Ingundis, with a look of mingled surprise and displeasure.

"From a confident hope that you might be induced, where so many private and public interests require it, to sacrifice the errors of your education, and embrace the saving doctrine of your husband." Here the speaker poured forth her whole stock of controversial lore, to establish the incontestible truth of Arianism, and with much coaxing and flattery endeavoured to influence the feelings, if she could not convince the reason of her auditress.

Ingundis was no theologian. Subtle distinctions of inscrutable points, which even her spiritual pastors could not comprehend, were to her little more than empty sounds. Unintelligible however as they were, she had been taught to attach high importance to her religious tenets; she was naturally self-willed, opinionative, and inflexible to a degree rarely found in so young a female; and being moreover indignant at the thought that she had been treated like a child, and supposed to have no convictions of her own, or none that she would not readily surrender, she resisted with equal firmness the entreaties and the arguments of her grandmother.

Infinite was the difficulty with which Goisvintha commanded her irascible temper in this and subsequent conversations of similar tenour and results, and she would have proceeded to immediate measures more consonant to her fierce temperament, had not the archbishop, who attributed her failure to a want of controversial skill, obtained permission to try his own polemical powers upon the refractory princess. His experiment proved unfortunate. The respect that had withheld Ingundis from resenting the importunity of her grandmother, did not extend to Quintana, whose arguments and solicitations she not only refused to hear, but sharply rebuked him for his apostacy

from catholicism, which she attributed to the most sordid and dishonourable motives.

Not content with this spirited rejection of his interference, she complained to Hermenegild, who hastened to his father, insisting with his customary bluntness and impetuosity, that the princess should be protected against a persecution so annoying and unwarrantable.

Recared, anxious, for reasons of his own, to embroil his brother with the king, stimulated the resentment of the former, whose cause he affected to espouse, while he covertly urged the latter not to interfere in behalf of the princess. Similar counsel being given, and indeed insisted upon by Goisvintha and the archbishop, both of whom now felt personally incensed against the young heretic, the weak monarch, ever unable to resist importunity, yielded to numbers and clamour, and gladly consented to remain neuter.

"It is an ecclesiastical affair," he exclaimed, catching at a suggestion of the prelate, as an excuse for himself, "and therefore, out of my jurisdiction. Settle it among yourselves, settle it among yourselves, or at all events disturb me not now, for I wish to have a long conversation with the foreign cook. Truly he is an admirable artist, and by far the most valuable part of the princess's portion."

Recared now submitted to Goisvintha, that as she had secured the neutrality of the king, she ought not to keep any measures with her contumacious grandaughter, especially as she was to be coerced for the good of her own soul. Tyrannical by nature, and intolerant from education and habit, the queen needed little incitement of this description. Proceeding to the apartment of Ingundis, she told her with fierce looks and menacing gestures, that the time for expostulation and entreaty being now over, she came to command that obedience to which she was doubly entitled, both as her queen and her grandmother; adding, that if she persisted in her perverseness, she should be thrown into the castle dungeon, and neither see Hermenegild nor any other living being, until she acknowledged her conversion to the Arian faith.

Ingundis was one of those whose cheeks became blanched instead of reddened by any vehement emotion; even her tremulous lips lost their colour, her eyes kindled with a concentrated indignation, and she gasped once or twice as if for breath; but these were her only marks of agitation. Too proud to betray her passion, she locked it up for the moment in her own swelling heart, and assuming a look and tone of calm, haughty defiance, exclaimed—"You may insult me with your tongue, but you dare not offer me any per-

sonal indignity, or if you did I would rather be imprisoned for life, or hewed into a thousand pieces, than apostatize from the true faith to the false and damnable doctrine of the Arians. But I repeat, you dare not—no, you dare not execute your threats. You may forget that you are my grandmother, but you will not be suffered to forget that I am the daughter of Sigibert, king of Austrasia, who, if his child receive any further insult, will ravage your kingdom with fire and sword, and avenge my wrongs by sacrificing their perpetrators, even in this very castle of Toledo. Beware how you provoke him! and speak to me no more, for I appeal to the king.—Avaunt! be gone!"

Had the princess been stormy, or abusive, Goisvintha might have remained unmoved;—but to see her affect such a provoking calmness and superiority, was intolerable; to be browbeaten by one whom she considered a mere child, was an audacity beyond all endurance; to hear her blaspheme against the faith of the Arians, was a sacrilege too atrocious to be borne. Maddened by an ungovernable rage that could not find sufficient vent in words, the fanatical hag with one blow of her sinewy arm struck Ingundis to the ground, kicked her till she was covered with blood, and then dragging her by the long hair across an

inner court of the castle, ordered her attendants to throw her into the fish pond at its further extremity, after they had stripped off her robes.

Taken completely by surprise, and inferior in strength to her brutal assailant, the young princess, utterly unable to offer any physical resistance, seemed, nevertheless, to disdain those moral means of defence which nature has provided for the sex in similar emergencies. She shed no tear, she made no appeal for pity or forbearance, she uttered no word, she screamed not for assistance, and it is probable that she would have submitted with the same stoical fortitude to the utmost outrages intended for her, and which she felt her total incompetency to prevent, had she not been rescued at the very moment when her beldame grandmother, assisted by the females of her suite, was about to cast her into the fish-pond.

Recared, anticipating the explosion, for which he had prepared the train, had no sooner witnessed it from the loophole were he was concealed, than he hurried to Hermenegild, bursting into his apartment with the exclamation of "Monstrous! monstrous! To this tyranny and brutality it is impossible to submit any longer. We have both been to blame, my dear brother, in suffering Goisvintha to usurp the management of the kingdom from the hands of our indolent and supple father, and to treat both you and me, princes

of the royal blood, as if we were the vilest of her slaves. For myself, I could submit, perhaps, to her insulting domination, but who that has a man's heart in his bosom, who that is not utterly callous to pity, can witness and not attempt to revenge her devilish cruelty to the young and beautiful Ingundis?"

"How? what? Ingundis!" cried the brother, starting up; "what new indignity has she dared to offer her?"

With an affected horror Recared proceeded to relate the enormity he had witnessed, but ere he had half concluded his statement, Hermenegild, snatching his battle axe from his girdle, had leaped from the window, and rushed along the passage that led to the court of the fish-pond. Forgetful of sex, station, or relationship in the first ungovernable ebullition of his passion, he would probably have sacrificed the queen herself, or some of her accomplices, had they not fortunately perceived his approach from a distance, when the whole party, scared by his looks and brandished weapon, fled precipitately into the private apartments of the castle, leaving the princess with torn garments and dishevelled locks extended upon the ground.

Narrow was the escape of the last of the fugitives, for Hermenegild hurled after her his battle-

axe, which struck into a door within an inch of her head; when he hastily enwrapped his prostrate mistress in her mantle, and snatching her up, ran with her to an adjoining chamber. From her silence, which he attributed to temporary insensibility, he feared that she was seriously hurt, and it was with a proportionate anxiety that he gazed upon her face as he placed her on a couch, and tenderly inquired what injuries she had sustained. In her pale features and fixed resolute eyes, there was a terrible composure so little in accordance with her extreme youth, her scattered tresses, her disordered attire, and the recent outrage she had sustained, that it assumed a character almost appalling.

"I am not hurt in body," replied the high-spirited girl, in a calm though hollow voice—"or however severely I may be wounded, I heed it not; but my soul feels that it has received a blow, and I swear to you, by the Creator of that soul, that I will never forget, never forgive it." "Leave me," she continued, suddenly reddening as she noticed the state of her garments—"send me instantly some of my women, and I will summon you to hear my determination when I am in a plight more becoming the daughter of King Sigibert."

Hermenegild, even in the midst of his own high

excitement, respected her proud sense of decorum, and immediately complied with her request, stationing himself in an ante-room, in expectation of being quickly recalled. After a brief delay he was desired to return. The exuberant tresses, as well as the deranged garments of the princess, were now restored to order; but in the interval that had elapsed, she appeared to have lost some portion of her indignant composure. A red circle exhibited itself upon either cheek, her bosom struggled with suppressed agitation, and a tear trembled in her eye; at the sight of the prince, however, she swallowed down the rising emotion, and forced herself to a resolute calmness. "Hermenegild!" she exclaimed in a firm tone, "I must instantly see the king. Give me a dagger that I may defend myself as I pass through the castle, or stab myself to the heart if I have no other means of avoiding the atrocious violence of the queen."

"I read a desperate purpose in your eye," said the prince, "that forbids me to trust you with a weapon; but I myself will be your guard, and woe to him who shall dare to obstruct me!"

"Were I in my own country, Hermenegild, the swords of a hundred thousand Franks would leap from their scabbards to avenge my wrongs. You

have drawn yours, and as I know it to be wielded by a brave man, I commit myself to its protection. On to the king!"

In passing through the court her companion took his battleaxe from the door in which it remained sticking, and replaced it in his girdle, when he advanced towards the presence chamber, brandishing his naked sword in his right hand, while he offered his left arm to his mistress. Declining, however, his proffered aid, either from a proud reserve or from a determination to show her perfect self-possession, she followed with an erect mien, a haughty countenance, and a firm step.

Before they made their appearance a rumour of the violence perpetrated by his consort had already reached the king's ear, who for the moment, thought more of his fish than of the outrage to Ingundis. "What!" he exclaimed, "have they dared to throw any one into my preserve? I had it made on purpose for my carp; they are the finest and fattest in all Spain, and who knows whether some of them may not have been killed?" A short time convinced him that the result might be of a more serious nature, for the countenances and appearance of Ingundis and her armed champion as they marched into the apartment, as well as the evident alarm of the courtiers, who drew back on either side to let them pass, gave him

quick assurance that the aggrieved parties came to demand full reparation, and were determined to enforce it.

"My dear daughter!" cried the king, anxious to appease her by preliminary concessions; "my dear daughter!—for such I feel you to be although you are not yet united to my son, I have learnt with deep sorrow the indignity offered to you by the queen in a moment of forgetfulness and passion, or as I may rather say of temporary madness. What can I say or do to make you atonement, and effect a reconciliation between you?"

"Nothing, for both measures are impossible. I demand an immediate escort to convey me back to King Sigibert."

"Good now! and for what purpose would you return to your father?"

"That he may bring me back at the head of an army to redress my wrongs, and punish those who have insulted me."

"Holy St. James! you came hither to perserve peace, not to occasion war. Consider my dear child, how comfortable we all were before your arrival, and would you have me leave my castle, and the foreign cook you brought with you, before he has shown me half the secrets of his art? Good now, dear Ingundis, take me not away from

the only pleasures and enjoyments of my old age, and I will do any thing to pacify you."

Hermenegild now interposed, reminding the princess that he himself was not only blameless in the whole transaction, but ready and eager to become her champion in demanding full satisfaction for her wrongs, under which circumstances he appealed to her sense of justice and love of truth whether she could consistently desert him, and repudiate him as her husband after their formal betrothal and mutual interchange of vows. Suggesting to Leovigild that Ingundis should be allowed to dictate whatever reparation she might think proper, he proposed that the marriage should be solemnised at once, in order that she might immediately assume her rank and rights as a royal princess, and wife to the heir apparent of the Spanish monarchy.

For some time the haughty girl remained inexorable, only relenting at last, as she candidly confessed, from a regard for the interests of her own nation, which she hesitated to embroil in a war that her concession might avert. "Though Goisvintha," she exclaimed, "has forgotten that she is my grandmother, I will remember it so far as simply to stipulate that she shall be banished from Toledo, never to return without my consent. As to the wretches of her suite, who presumed to

lay violent hands upon a king's daughter, I demand that they be publicly branded on the forehead, and exiled from Spain for ever. Methinks I can indicate them all, but if I inculpate any one wrongfully, I leave her at liberty to clear herself by the customary ordeal of fire and water."

Several of the courtiers, all of whom detested the queen, implored Leovigild to accede to these terms as the only means of preventing a foreign, in addition perhaps to a civil war; the prince declared the conditions to be so moderate that he could not sheathe his sword till they were granted; and the monarch ever ready to adopt any expedient that promised present extrication from difficulty, gave a pledge of consent without considering how he was to redeem it. Upon this understanding the parties separated, and the discordant elements within the castle of Toledo were lulled into a temporary tranquillity.

It did not endure beyond the following day. No sooner had Goisvintha learned the treaty made by the king, than she stormed like a whole sisterhood of furies, vowing that no force should compel her to move from Toledo; her attendants, who were under sentence of branding and banishment, vociferated in chorus against the enormity of condemning them without a trial for having obeyed the orders of their royal mistress; the archbishop

espousing the cause of the queen, fulminated anathemas against all those who had counselled such ignominious concessions to a young and insolent Arian; Recared seized every opportunity for blowing the flames of dissension, and the whole court was a scene of strife, uproar and confusion.

Indolent, indecisive, and ever yielding to the last clamour that assailed him, the unhappy king, who now found the impossibility of performing the stipulations into which he had been hurried, proposed, by way of compromise, that the betrothed couple should withdraw to Seville, where the Catholic bishop would immediately solemnize their marriage; and he recommended that they should continue to reside in that city, until he could devise measures for fully satisfying Ingundis, and ensuring her honourable return to Toledo.

As this plausible proposition had been suggested by Recared, he was requested by the king to communicate it to his brother, and to urge its adoption. This was readily promised, but instead of complying with the latter part of the request, he exclaimed, after he had stated the purport of his mission, "Surely, dear Hermenegild, you will not be so besotted as to submit to this treacherous violation of a solemn compact, and to comply with an insidious proposal, which in reality banishes you and the princess, the aggrieved parties, instead

of the audacious aggressors, to whom it grants triumph and impunity. Were I in your place I would so far meet the wishes of our royal father as to retire to Seville for the solemnisation of my marriage; since Quintana refuses to perform it here; but instead of tamely awaiting my recall, which in all probability would never occur, I would by one bold step enable myself to punish all my own enemies, as well as those of the princess, and return in glorious triumph to Toledo as a conqueror and liberator."

"A desirable consummation, but how is it to be accomplished?"

"By proclaiming yourself king!" whispered Recared.

"What!" ejaculated the prince, starting back, with a look of horror, "would you have me raise the standard of revolt, and declare war against my own father?"

"No—not against him, but against Goisvintha and Quintana, who are the real, though usurping monarchs of Spain. It is they who debar you from your right, since, but for them, our father would gladly resign to you his throne in order that he might retire into the enjoyments of private life, for which alone he is now fitted."

"No hint of this nature has ever passed his lips. To me he has invariably been a most indul-

gent king and father. With his own hands, first having obtained the consent of the nobility, did he put the princely diadem upon my head; he has publicly acknowledged me for his successor; he has made me lord of the fair and fertile province of Bœtica. I dare not act the traitor against so kind and generous a parent."

"A prince of the Goths," cried Ingundis, "should dare do any thing that may benefit his country. Recared is a wise counsellor, and his words are truth. Were it not a filial deed to liberate your father from the tyranny of Goisvintha and the archbishop; to leave him in undisturbed retirement from public affairs, to the pleasures of his kitchen, his cellars, his falcons and his mules, the only objects for which he desires to prolong existence? Were it not a just deed to punish the queen and the intriguing prelate, her accomplice? Were it not a patriotic deed to give the Goths a young and active soldier for their king, instead of the weak and superannuated Leovigild, who, so far from being competent to command a brave nation, cannot maintain authority even in his own palace?"

"I am no logician of the schools to maintain an argument," replied the prince, whose generous and affectionate nature recoiled from the advice thus urged upon him, "but every feeling of my heart tells

me that I could never, under any circumstances, become a traitor and a rebel to so good a father. Even were I thus to win his crown, its weight would quickly sink me into the grave."

"And if it did, would you not die a king?" asked Ingundis, with a slight expression of scorn. "Is there any tomb more glorious than a throne? As for me, I would rather be the widow of a monarch, than the wife of one who feared to snatch the sceptre when it was offered to his grasp. Hermenegild, nature intended you for a hero, but you have as many fears and scruples as a woman."

"I fear nothing but ingratitude to my father. Am I not his heir, and will not his natural death soon ensure to me all that you are now urging me to wrest from him by force?"

"Of this there is no certainty: death is sometimes slow, and ever capricious. His dart may strike your own bosom before it reaches your father's, and thus *you* will never wear a crown, *I* shall never be saluted as a queen, and we shall *both* be defrauded of our revenge. Such magnificent objects as these are not always within our reach. They must be clutched when they can be caught, or they are lost to us for ever."

"No more of this at present, dear Ingundis, for my heart is full, and I cannot continue the discus-

sion. Gladly would I meet the king's wishes, so far as they coincide with mine own, by withdrawing to Seville for the solemnisation of our marriage; but we will return to Toledo when and in what way we shall both think fit."

"Be it so," said the princess; "the queen, my natural guardian, is now my bitter enemy. It becomes not the daughter of king Sigibert to remain any longer in Spain without a protector. As my husband, you will be bound not only to defend me from future wrong, but to redress my past injuries. I am ready to accompany you to Seville, and thus far may your brother communicate our intentions to the king."

"It is well! it is well!" whispered Recared to himself, as he retired exulting in the success of his machinations; "I need not urge Hermenegild any further. When he is married to Ingundis, I may safely leave him to her promptings. Ambitious and revengeful, she will not rest till she has compelled him to raise the standard of rebellion, and then, whatever be the result, I must be the winner. If he succeed, I shall claim large reward for having prompted his design. If he fail, and I will take good care that he *shall* fail, his life is forfeit, and I am the next heir to the crown!"

CHAPTER V.

NOTWITHSTANDING the roughness of his manners, his unbridled passions, which sometimes hurried him into ferocity, and the dissolute nature of his ordinary pursuits, there were several redeeming points in the character of Hermenegild. Personal courage, that vulgar quality which is ever the most common in the most barbarous age, can scarcely be reckoned among the virtues: and the prince had much better titles to esteem, in the midst of all his faults, than his dauntless intrepidity. Frank, generous, affectionate, grateful, he was more particularly attached to his father, whom he loved with a sincerity seldom found in a favourite son. That he should rush into his presence with a drawn sword, and make such peremptory stipulations for satisfying Ingundis, must be attributed to his impetuosity and the prevalent coarseness of man-

ners, rather than to any want of attachment or duty, for though his actions might seem occasionally disrespectful, his heart never lost any portion of its filial fondness.

Recared, knowing his disposition in this respect, and loath to leave him to the unassisted influence of Ingundis, sought him again on the following day, and solemnly declaring that the resistance he counselled was for the sole purpose of liberating the king and promoting his happiness, pledged himself to hasten to Seville, and to join the prince's standard, so soon as it should be openly raised. "Success," he observed, "would be much more likely to attend the enterprise when it was undertaken by both the royal princes, a conjunction which would establish the justice of their cause, and ensure to them the support of the whole nation." Although Ingundis enforced these arguments with all her fearless and decisive eloquence, and even taunted her lover with a want of boldness, a point upon which he was peculiarly sensitive, he remained immovable in his loyalty and duty.

"No," he exclaimed, pushing back his whispering brother with a look of aversion; "against the queen and the archbishop, of whom I have never concealed my hatred, I would cheerfully draw my sword had they an army to defend them, but to the aged father who has heaped so many favours

upon my head, I will never, never prove a rebel. I will see him—I will argue with him, when I may perhaps still persuade him to redress the wrongs of Ingundis, and to discard those tyrannising usurpers who have wrenched from him his royal authority, and reduced him to a mere cypher in the state."

Fearing the result of an interview which might frustrate all his schemes, Recared took instant measures for preventing it. Just as Hermenegild was preparing to claim an audience, his brother rushed into his room with looks of agitation, exclaiming, "Fly, fly! if you would preserve the liberty of Ingundis. The queen and the archbishop are paramount. They have prevailed on our weak father to sign an order for the imprisonment of the princess until she shall abjure the Catholic doctrine, while you, my dear brother, are to be immediately exiled to your principality."

"Ha! is it so! is it come to this?" exclaimed the prince, little suspecting that the whole statement was an invention of the designing Recared; "Nay then I will save my poor father from the commission of a crime. We will make our escape while yet we may, and after our arrival at Seville, and the solemnisation of our marriage, we will consider what further steps we should adopt. How say you, Ingundis?"

"*Now* I am ready to accompany you," cried the princess, snatching up a dagger; "for if you should fall in defending me, I shall know how to prevent my imprisonment."

"And that man must have little value for his life," said Hermenegild, plucking out his battle-axe, "who would dare to obstruct our progress. To horse! to horse! We will leave Toledo far in our rear before the night sits in."

A few attendants of the prince, too much accustomed to his impetuous movements to be surprised at the suddenness of the order, were summoned to accompany him; the princess issued similar directions to two female Franks, the only individuals of her own nation who remained behind after the return of her escort; and the whole party mounted on fleet horses, were quickly speeding along the road in a southern direction. Though they had no reason to anticipate pursuit, still less to fear it, for Hermenegild and his men were well armed, they prosecuted their journey with unabated speed, and far into the night, principally that they might reach a country palace belonging to the prince, in which he wished the fair companion of his flight to take a few hours rest.

Notwithstanding its lofty name this residence was nothing more than a fortified farm-house, surrounded by yards, granaries, stables, gardens,

vineyards, workshops of all descriptions, and cultivated lands of considerable extent. It was the gift of Leovigild, who possessed in the different provinces various establishments of a similar nature, whence he derived his principal revenues; for his subjects, however ready to fight for him, had little ability and less disposition to pay taxes of any sort. In these royal farms the labours of agriculture, hunting, fishing, and the mechanical trades were performed by slaves for the emolument of the sovereign, the magazines being filled with corn, wine, and provisions, either for sale, or for supplying the lavish consumption and profuse hospitality of the regal table. As they afforded resting places for the court on their grand hunting excursions, they were provided with pleasant grounds and plantations, as well as open places for sport and exercise.

It was arranged that our travellers should resume their journey shortly after sunrise on the following morning, and the princess, although she had only enjoyed a few hours sleep, was ready at the appointed time. Struck, however, with the beauty of the gardens and shrubberies, which reminded her of a similar abode in her own country, she expressed a wish to walk through them before her departure, and her lover immediately offered himself as her guide and escort. Skirting a thick

hedge of aloes and wild pomegranate, interspersed with oleander, myrtle, and honeysuckle, they reached a thickly-planted grove, where the bushy heads and glossy leaves of the locust trees contrasted with the tall dark pine, the pale green of the olive, and the massy foliage of the chestnut. At the extremity of this spot was a clump of palms, from the boughs of which men were swinging in ropes gathering the clusters of gold-coloured dates; and in the shade of these trees there was a rustic seat, on which the lovers placed themselves to admire the view that it commanded over a district of mingled wood, pasture, arable-land, and wide uncultivated heaths, watered by the meandering Guadiana.

Immediately in front of them extended an enamelled meadow; the scarlet-eyed bee-eater hovering over the wild flowers in search of his insect prey, gave his green and gold plumage to the sun; a flock of goats were browsing on the banks of the stream, whose gurgling waters sparkled in the ray; the birds were singing amid the myrtle bushes; and at one corner of the field a group of male and female slaves, assembled thus early in the morning to celebrate the anniversary of the patron saint to whom the farm was dedicated, were dancing in the shade to the merry

music of a pipe and tabor, played by a jolly-looking friar.

Neither Hermenegild nor his companion were of a temperament to sympathise very deeply with scenes of rural tranquillity and happiness, yet there was something in the spectacle before them which they could not contemplate without a soothing complacency, especially when they contrasted it with the turbulence, wrangling, and intrigues of the court at Toledo. For a moment Ingundis, forgetting all her schemes of ambition and revenge, sate, in an unconscious reverie, gazing at the dancers, or listening to the commingled sound of birds and bees, of rustling boughs and murmuring waters, until she started up, exclaiming, "Hark! I hear the neighing of our horses. It is time that we should resume our flight."

"Flight!" cried her lover, reddening as he repeated that ignominious word. "I am not accustomed to fly."

"Towards liberty and independence the bravest man may fly," said the princess. "Were you escaping from the battle-field, I should disdain to accompany you; but you are seeking, as I trust, a kingdom and a crown, or a glorious death; wherefore I say, once more, let us to horse, and quickly."

Without replying to this significant remark, the prince returned in a pensive mood along the thick hedge, the centre of which he had just reached, when a youth raised his head from the other side, and ejaculated "Prince Hermenegild! beware of Recared, your brother! trust him not, or he will betray you to your ruin!" with which words the speaker plunged hastily amid the clustered trees and underwood, and was presently out of sight. Short as was the glimpse obtained of this apparent youth, Hermenegild had instantly recognised the features, as well as the voice, of the fair Incognita whom he had encountered in the quarry.

"Stay, I conjure you!" he cried out; "stay, mysterious stranger. Tell me who and what you are, as well as the meaning of your words. By heaven, you shall not escape me thus!" and he struggled to force his way through the hedge. For some minutes its almost impervious growth resisted his efforts, and when, at length, he succeeded, and found himself in the tangled underwood on the other side, he knew not in what direction to pursue the fugitive through the maze of foliage and vegetation that encompassed him. Paths there were none, and, whenever he hurried along the openings in the brake, they invariably conducted him to some impenetrable thicket, which left him no alternative but to retrace his

steps. Similar attempts in other directions ending always in the same disappointment, convinced him that he was more likely to lose himself than discover the object of his search, and, in fact, it was only by shouting aloud to the princess, and guiding himself by her replying voice, that he was enabled to rejoin her.

That he should thus impetuously rush after a youth whose homely dress attested him to be of inferior rank, had filled her with an amazement which was immeasurably heightened when she learnt that the supposed boy was, in reality, a fair girl, whose mysterious and irreconcilable appearances in the cavern and in the streets of Toledo, as a princess and as a pauper, he now recounted, adding that he would summon all the retainers of the farm to prevent her escape, and force her to confess her name and rank, as well as her reasons for the solemn warning she had pronounced.

"Commit not any such unwarrantable discourtesy," said Ingundis. "You confess yourself indebted to this ambiguous monitress for your life; it is evident that her purposes towards you are still friendly; she has cautioned you against attempting to penetrate her secret; gratitude, therefore, as well as prudence, should withhold you from attempting to lift up the veil behind which

she chooses to conceal herself. Let us leave her to her disguises and her concealment, and discuss, as we resume our journey, the probability of the dark designs which she attributes to Prince Recared."

Preoccupied for some time past with the arrival of his mistress, with the bacchanalian revels in honour of her Frankish escort, and the domestic squabbles that had so quickly succeeded their departure, Hermenegild had scarcely found time to advert for a single moment to his fair liberator; but her present apparition turned his thoughts more strongly than ever into their former channel, and he could converse of little else during the remainder of their journey. Ingundis, though not deficient in female curiosity, was less anxious to develop her history and the motives of her conduct, than to fathom her allusion to Recared, whose character, so far as she herself had been enabled to observe, had by no means won for him her respect or confidence. Upon this point the attention of the prince also was presently fixed. Naturally unsuspicious, and deeming others as frank and ingenuous as himself, a distrust of his brother had never crossed his mind, nor could he now believe, in spite of the warning voice, that he would ever seek to betray him to his ruin. "He has strenuously urged me," said the prince; "to

raise the standard of rebellion against my father."

"Against the queen and the archbishop, the usurpers of his authority," interposed Ingundis.

"I will not distrust his motives," resumed her companion, "but I will not follow his advice; and in this I am now confirmed by the counsel of my friendly monitress."

"Respecting whose objects and means of information you are utterly in the dark. What have you to do with Recared, be he treacherous or trustworthy? You want not either his assistance or his advice. It is for you, the successor to the throne, to see that its authority be not usurped; it is for you to assert your own rights, and avenge your own wrongs, as I will mine, if he, who ought to be my champion, shrinks from the glorious perils of his office."

A sort of playful scorn animated the features of the young beauty as she launched this taunt; but all fascinating and beloved as she was, neither charms, reproaches, nor entreaties, could extort a promise from her lover that he would throw off his allegiance to his father.

In such conversations, varied by innumerable conjectures as to the fair and mysterious incognita who took such an apparent interest in the prince's fate, they beguiled their journey, passing the

dreary mountainous range of the Sierra Morena, crossing more than once the river Bœtis, now the Guadalquiver, and traversing the prince's province of Bœtica and its extensive olive woods, until they arrived without accident at Seville, even in those early days a flourishing commercial city. By the Visigothic portion of the inhabitants, among whom his approved courage and rough soldierly bearing had rendered him popular, Hermenegild was received with joyful acclamations; while the Spanish catholics, who were the more numerous class, and seldom well affected towards their Arian rulers, observed a sullen silence or confined their greetings to the princess. Leander, however, the catholic bishop, more liberal, or perhaps more calculating than his countrymen, hastened to do cheerful homage to his prince, welcoming him with a cordiality and frankness so congenial to his own that it instantly won his heart, especially when the prelate counselled immediate marriage with Ingundis, and eagerly solicited the honour of performing the ceremony. This early prepossession in the prince's mind was strengthened by the manners of the bishop, who, while his general character was unimpeachable, affected not the hypocritical sanctity of the demure Quintana, but was of merry discourse, a lover of good cheer, and

almost as potent a toper as Hermenegild himself. "By St. James!" exclaimed the latter, unable to resist such a special recommendation to his favour, "were they all like you, good men and staunch drinkers, I should not only think better of bishops but of the catholic doctrine itself."

"Perhaps your highness has known none of the episcopalian order except Quintana, of Toledo, who is in fact no bishop, but an apostate and usurper; and as to our doctrine, I venture to hope that it has never been properly expounded to you."

"Perhaps not," said the prince, alarmed at the preparatory hem! of his companion, which seemed to threaten an immediate attempt at his conversion. "Perhaps not, but I am in no present cue for listening to controversial divinity, so prythee fill my goblet, for methinks the wine of my own province is still better than the rough grape of Cantabria."

Brief and unpromising as it was, this colloquy emboldened the bishop to undertake a design of no mean moment, and apparently of no facile accomplishment, its object being to convert the prince to catholicism, even before his marriage, which had been deferred for a few days, in order to make preparations for celebrating it with due

pomp. Never had a similar project, undertaken by a grand and highly respected dignitary of the church, been prosecuted by means so inconsistent, and apparently so little adapted to ensure a successful issue. Aware that the object of his proselyting zeal loved wine as much as he disliked theological discussions, the bibulous bishop tempted him to listen to the latter by indulging his propensity for the former.

Every day saw them engaged in debates and potations equally deep, the prince being disposed to listen with special attention to the arguments of a jovial expounder, whose strength of head in spiritual matters he readily inferred from his ability to quaff as many cups as himself, without any derangement of his faculties. To doctrinal subtleties Hermenegild had never given his attention, nor did he now lend himself to them, even when they came recommended by flowing cups, but he was disposed, without any very profound enquiry, to admit the truth of the catholic tenets when he saw how powerful an influence they had exercised upon the mind of his beloved Ingundis; and how compatible was their adoption, as he had episcopal evidence to convince him, with cheerful manners and bacchanalian indulgences. When he betook himself to the princess, who had been made ac-

quainted with the bishop's design, she failed not to advocate the same cause, not so much by arguments as by persuasion and entreaty; never omitting, however, to dwell upon the accession of power and other political advantages which would accrue to her lover from his adopting the same faith as the great majority of the people.

Thus assailed by the joint allurements of love and wine, the prince soon succumbed, and avowed himself a catholic. Not a moment was allowed him for reflection or retraction. In the cathedral of Seville, and in the presence of the assembled clergy he solemnly abjured the errors of Arianism, adopted the Nicene creed, and received the rite of confirmation; on the same day, in the midst of extraordinary pomp and universal rejoicing, (always excepting the Arian population,) he was married to Ingundis; and the evening was devoted to revelry and banquetting, at which the jocund bishop, exhilarated by the success of his scheme, drank to the spiritual and bodily health of his convert in such copious cups, which the latter reciprocated, that both parties became thoroughly inebriated, the prince finally reeling about the hall with his brandished battle-axe, threatening to exterminate all those who would not pledge him in a large wine cup which he held in his left hand;

while the bishop, following him with unsteady steps, drew down the edge of the vessel to his own lips, and repeatedly spilt a portion of its contents in the vain endeavour to direct them into his mouth.

CHAPTER VI.

NATURE has implanted so clear a sense of right and wrong in every man's bosom, that we can seldom err, so long as we follow the admonitions of conscience; but when bigotry sets up a new standard, which affecting to be superior to every other, is in reality a mere human invention, and often made to adapt itself to the worst of passions, the light of reason is utterly extinguished, and although the *ignis fatuus* which we have substituted for it may lead us into the most perilous snares and pitfalls, we still flounder undismayed from one depth to another, because we imagine ourselves to be following a heavenly beacon. Of this melancholy truth Hermenegild was destined to afford a signal example.

Leander, the Bishop of Seville, in spite of his addiction to wassailing, and his merry tempera-

ment, was a zealous fanatic, and being thoroughly persuaded that he should render an acceptable service to God by substituting a Catholic for an Arian monarch, he listened to the suggestions of Ingundis, who pointed out how easily he might urge his new convert, by the influences of religion, to throw off his allegiance, and claim the crown for his own head. No thoughts of ambition, no hopes of personal advancement impelled the prelate to act upon this advice; his honest and disinterested bigotry sought to do service to his Maker, not to himself; while his success in the conversion of Hermenegild persuaded him that the ductile mind of the neophyte was now in a state to receive any impression marked with the characters of devotion.

Not by spiritual fulminations, nor even by authorotative language did he attempt to assail his convert, with whom entreaties were always more efficacious than menaces; but preparing him, as before, by cheerful converse at the festive board, to listen to his arguments, he gradually unfolded his purpose, impressing upon him that in proportion as the immortal soul was of greater importance than the perishable body, and eternity more precious than time, so was the duty that he owed to his heavenly Father immeasurably superior to that which could be claimed by his earthly parent.

Catholicism, once established upon the throne, would soon, he remarked, win to its bosom, and consequently to salvation, the whole Arian flock, now wandering from the true path; and to Hermenegild would belong the glory of this world, as well as the rewards in the next, of accomplishing this great and acceptable work.

Justificatory examples were adduced from the Jewish history, as well as warning instances of the judgments inflicted upon those who refused to perform the delegated work of heaven, when there was an opportunity of reclaiming a whole people; while he repeatedly urged, as Ingundis had done before him, that the step he recommended would not, in fact, be a dethronement of the king, but of the apostate bishop and the imperious queen, who had jointly usurped his authority. So long as the prince had followed the dictates of his own reason, he had stood immovable against the insidious artifices of Recared, and the blandishments or arguments of his beloved Ingundis; but when he surrendered up his judgment to an imagined expounder of the heavenly will, his best feelings were easily made conducive to the commission of the worst and most atrocious deeds; a perversion of which fanaticism affords appalling evidence, traced in characters of blood upon every page of its history.

"It grieves me to the heart," sighed the prince, "to draw my sword, even in appearance, against my dear and ever-indulgent father; but if the interests of religion and the true church can be advanced by such a step, it becomes me to submit."

"Abraham obeyed," said the Bishop," when he was commanded to offer up Isaac his affectionate son; and it is for you to testify an equal reverence when you are imperatively called upon to make a sacrifice of your beloved father."

"A sacrifice of my father!" roared the prince, grasping the handle of his battle-axe; "By the Holy Trinity! I will cleave the skull of the first man, even though he wear a mitre, who shall dare to offer him the smallest indignity!"

"You mistake me, my son, and have understood in a literal sense that which I spoke figuratively. Far be it from me to counsel any personal disrespect to your royal father. It is of your own filial feelings,—allow me to replenish your wine cup,—that you are called upon to make a sacrifice; and in proportion as this offering is painful to yourself, so will it be acceptable to the Lord. His will, and not ours, be done! and that such is the will of heaven has been confirmed to me by an unequivocal, indeed, by a miraculous manifestation; for as I was praying this morning before the image of the

virgin, imploring some sign by which I might know whether it were right that I should urge you on to proclaim yourself king, behold, the sacred figure complacently bowed its head, and then became immovable as before."

It is not impossible that the senses of the zealous bishop, while thus engaged in prayer, had been deluded by his wishes, for on all ordinary occasions he was honest and veracious; but neither is it impossible that the whole story was an invention, for so blinding and corrupting is superstition that its votaries have often thought a pious fraud or falsehood a grateful offering to the God of truth. Whatever might be its origin, it decided the course of the credulous Hermenegild, who being plied in rapid succession with bumpers, arguments, and repetitions of the image story, and pledges of support from the whole catholic church, consented in an evil hour to throw off his allegiance, and proclaim himself King of Spain; though not until he had stipulated that his father should be treated with perfect respect, be allowed to remain, if he thought fit, in the castle of Toledo, and be suffered to indulge in all his customary pursuits and pleasures.

Great was the joy of Ingundis when she learnt that her husband had decided upon this most perilous enterprise. Ambition was her ruling passion,

the insults heaped upon her by Goisvintha rankled in her bosom, and she had made a solemn vow never to forget, never to forgive them. For vengeance in its guiltier acceptation of bloodshed or violence, she did not so much thirst as for an opportunity of degrading the queen, and of occupying her place upon the throne, in the hope of accomplishing which objects her whole soul became imbued with an instant energy that imparted an additional animation and a character of still more inflexible resolution to her countenance.

A mere girl in years and appearance—a beauty, and a bride, it was a grand, almost a sublime spectacle to gaze upon her and listen to her speech, as with the elevated look and calm courage of a heroine, she recommended measures of the most daring nature, and suggested means for their successful accomplishment. Although uninvited to attend, she took her place, as a matter of right, at the councils convened by Hermenegild; and the clergy and nobles, although they might not be reconciled to the presence, could not ever deny the boldness, nor often impugn the judgment of their young and fair fellow counsellor.

"Our undertaking is full of jeopardy," she exclaimed at one of these meetings, "and to insure its prosperous issue, we must be as prompt in our resolves as fearless in our acts. We are all princi-

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pals alike, and every one must apply his undivided energies to the advancement of the common cause. Already have I written to demand assistance from the chiefs of the Suevi, and by the same messenger I have despatched letters to King Sigibert, my royal father. For the Franks, my fellow countrymen, these missives will be enough. I have stated that their princess has been grossly insulted, and they will hasten by thousands to avenge her. But they are remote, and before their succours could reach us our enterprise might be crushed. Nothing must be left to chance; fate and fortune must be compelled to league with us. The Roman stations on our sea-coast are close at hand; their army in Africa is not remote. Their aid will insure our quick success, and it must be instantly demanded. The more dignified the rank of the ambassador, the less is he likely to fail in his mission; wherefore I would submit that our reverend and holy coadjutor, the bishop, be requested to take immediate shipping for Constantinople to solicit the support of the Emperor Maurice; you, my dear Hermenegild, will fill your proper station at the head of the army, when it shall be formed and assembled; while I myself will forthwith seek the Roman stations on the coast, or their general in Africa, to negotiate the terms of an alliance."

A murmur of applause from the council testified

their approbation of the young heroine's advice. Leander, ever zealous and prompt where he imagined the interests of religion to be concerned, professed his readiness to undertake the embassy proposed; but Hermenegild did not seem to relish the loss of his beautiful bride, or her undertaking a mission which might be fraught with a thousand perils. "Dearest Ingundis," he exclaimed, "we are but just married, and I thought you loved me too well to leave me thus early."

"I love you well and dearly," replied the princess; "but I love still more your fame, your safety, and your life, all of which are implicated in the success of our enterprise. Your sword must now be your bride, and I will find a bridegroom in the glorious exploit to which my soul is wedded. Henceforth, the toil of war must be our recreation, the trumpet and the battle shout our festive music. Away with dalliance and delight! Away, too, with gawds and bawbles! Off! off! these bridal ornaments and gems, which to me would now be utterly worthless, if they might not be sold to purchase swords and spears. There will be time enough for such trinkets, when we have won a crown in which to put them." With these words, she tore the jewels from her dress, and tossed them down upon the council table.

"But have you weighed the dangers of a mission to the perfidious Romans?" asked Hermenegild.

"When I have set my mind upon a purpose, I weigh nothing but the best and quickest means of accomplishing it. Educated among camps, the daughter of Sigibert and Brunechild is not likely to be scared by trifles; and against the common perils of travel, I shall, of course, have the protection of an escort."

"But, dearest Ingundis, it has ever been my wish to expel these intruding Romans altogether from the soil of Spain, while you would invite them into the very heart of our country."

"Only for a moment, and that they may give us strength to push them afterwards into the sea; an exploit which will, indeed, be worthy of your arms, when you shall be king of Spain. Hark, Hermenegild! do you hear the golden and glorious sound of that word king—king of Spain?"

"But were it not treacherous thus to delude the Romans?"

"They never spared friend or foe when they could cheat or betray; and it is ever warrantable to assail the perfidious with their own weapons. What! shall we stand in awe of these degenerate Greeks? We have conquered them when they deserved the name of Romans, and shall we suffer

them to beard us now? Away with timidity and irresolution! What have we to fear? Justinian is no longer emperor—Belisarius is dead—Hermenegild is living, and Ingundis is his wife!"

In the look and tone of the princess, as she uttered this speech, there were no indications of arrogance, but rather the expression of a dauntless, masculine soul, conscious of its superiority, and not deterred from asserting it by any affectation of humility. Its effect upon her auditors, enhanced by the youth and bridal beauty of the speaker, was electrical. Leander, proclaiming his belief that she was inspired by heaven for the special achievement of their great and pious undertaking, pronounced her to be amiable as Rachel, wise as Rebecca, faithful as Sarah, beautiful as Esther, and bold as Deborah and Judith. Unwilling to acknowledge any real pre-eminence in so girlish-looking a coadjutrix, the rest of the council readily assigned their sympathy with her intrepid eloquence to the presence of some divine afflatus. Its influence, therefore, penetrated their hearts without wounding their self-love. All were fortified, stimulated, and encouraged by so spirit-stirring an example.

Hermenegild, beholding her adamantine inflexibility, and believing her to be really commissioned for the task, gave his reluctant consent to her

embassy to the Romans, and adopted instant measures for providing a strong and trustworthy escort.

A vessel was engaged for the conveyance to Constantinople of the episcopal ambassador, who failed not to store it with such rare wines and savoury conserves as might best beguile the tedium of his voyage. Early and late, the prince devoted himself to the enrolment and exercise of his troops; his personal partisans were numerous; many of the Goths, eager to exchange an aged and supine, for a vigorous and warlike king, clung to their young leader in spite of his apostacy from Arianism; the Catholics crowded to his standard; all were animated with confidence and enthusiasm —never had a great enterprise commenced with more auspicious promises of success.

Leaving affairs in this condition at Seville, we will revert for a brief space to Toledo, whence the flight of the prince and his fair companion had, in the first instance, excited no very marked sensation. Leovigild was at dinner when the archbishop, hastening into the hall, gave him the first intelligence that his son, at Seville, had embraced Catholicism, had raised the standard of revolt, and proclaimed himself king. "It is false as the devil himself, who is the father of all lies," cried the monarch. "Which of you, the queen or

yourself, for both of you equally hate my brave boy—which of you, I say, hath trumped up this monstrous calumny? What! my favourite son, my open-hearted and affectionate Hermenegild? Why, I never denied him a request in my life—it was my delight to heap favours upon him—and *he* to prove a rebel and a traitor! Impossible! Bring me no more of these outrageous fictions, and, above all things, let me not be disturbed at my meals, to which, as you must be well aware, I have a special aversion."

"But it is my painful duty to apprize your majesty that my information does not rest upon rumour or calumny, but upon official despatches which I hold in my hand," and he tendered them to the king.

"Forgeries and falsehoods; but read them, nevertheless, for they will not interrupt my meal so much as talking. More wine, more wine; give me my tulip-cup, and bring me yonder dish of venison." At first the incredulous monarch only listened at intervals as he changed his dishes, or replenished his bumpers; but when he heard the proclamation which had been issued by Hermenegild, when he saw the well-known seal and signature of the governor of Seville to the despatches, and upon summoning to his presence, and strictly interrogating the messenger who had brought

them, received confirmation of the news from an eye-witness, who communicated to him also the rumour current at Seville, that the Suevi, the Franks, and even the Romans, the common enemy, were to be invited into the country to support the rebellion—the long-smothered volcano of his violent passions burst forth in an explosion that resembled a sudden fit of phrensy, rather than a momentary ebullition of rage.

With inflamed and distorted features he started from the table, poured a torrent of abuse and malediction upon his son, and brandishing a drawn sword ran wildly about the hall as if seeking the object of his wrath. Like wildfire did the news spread through the palace, the queen, and Recared were presently upon the spot, and every one seemed anxious to rival the justly-incensed father in venting curses upon the unnatural, the abandoned, the rebellious, the diabolical Hermenegild. Their passionate invectives, however, instead of inflaming seemed to assuage the indignation of the king, who could not bear to hear his favourite son abused by any one but himself. With a strange revulsion of feeling, he turned upon the maligners of Hermenegild, accusing them of having driven his brave boy into rebellion by their outrages upon Ingundis, and by their denial of satisfaction for her wrongs. Eagerly vindicating

themselves from this charge they sought to turn the royal anger back into its former channel, and to bend the supple and indolent monarch as they had hitherto been accustomed! But grief and strong emotion had made him headstrong, and even fierce; he would neither be commanded nor entreated, but drove them from his presence with bitter reproaches; and having now no object on which to wreak his passion, he retired exhausted and wretched to his private apartment, buried his face in his hands, and wept for some time with an uncontrollable vehemence.

Neither the queen nor the archbishop were in the least prepared for the change which the revolt of the prince, produced in a great degree by their own machinations, instantly operated in the character of the king. His natural energies, though nearly smothered by age, sloth, and indulgence, were dormant, not dead, and the present crisis roused them once more into activity. "Look you," he exclaimed, as he displayed the proclamation of Hermenegild before the queen and her episcopal colleague, "you are here accused of having usurped all the powers of the state, leaving to me, the lawful monarch of Spain, nothing but the shadow of royalty. It is true, or rather it *was* true, for I am no longer the puppet here described, Leovigild is himself again—I am once more king

of Spain; ay, and as such I will crush the ungrateful viper who seeks his father's crown. I will myself lead my army against him, and if I encounter him in the field, and my good sword fail me not, I will rid my kingdom of the unnatural rebel who has thus madly plunged it into all the horrors of civil warfare."

Nor was this a mere burst of evanescent vigour, the flash of his expiring energies. His actions confirmed his assertions. No longer confiding to Quintana the duties of prime minister, he rose every morning at an early hour, opening and reading the despatches himself. In vain did the queen, whose hatred of Hermenegild had now been aggravated by his apostacy from Arianism, endeavour to recover her influence over her husband's mind. He would not even allow her to be present as heretofore at the deliberations of the council, and when she became clamorous and abusive, he ordered her to be carried away, and confined to her own apartments. Early and late he superintended the military preparations, giving orders for the collection and distribution of troops in the provinces, and discharging in his own person all the functions of an active and prudent commander. Opposition and unfavourable tidings did but inflame his indignation, and brace him the more firmly to his purpose.

News was brought him that the fortified towns of Merida and Cordova, as well as Seville, had strenuously espoused the party of Hermenegild. "By St. James, I scarcely wonder at it," he exclaimed with a self-reproaching sneer; "they think they have to deal with a puppet king, but they shall quickly find and feel that Leovigild still wields the sword of his valorous predecessor, Euric, the warrior.* Away with these tawdry jewelled arms—lead back to their stables those useless white mules. Give me my sword of Euric, my iron helmet and cuirass; bring me my large black war-horse—Leovigild is no longer a crowned bauble, but a Gothic general!"

Even Recared, though usually cold and unimpassioned, felt the full excitement of a crisis on which he knew the success of all his insidious schemes to depend. If his brother triumphed in the coming contest, the sons that might be born to him would of course succeed to the crown he won. If he failed, even without perishing on the field of battle, his life would be forfeited as a rebel and a traitor, and nothing would then stand between himself and the throne. Thus impelled by selfishness and ambition, Recared even excelled his father in the ardour and activity with which

* King of the Goths, who wrested Toledo from the Romans, in the year 467.

he devoted himself to that division of the army which was entrusted to him, as well as to the general preparations for the impending struggle. Even the courtiers, at the prospect of war, shook off their luxurious sloth, and prepared to meet its hardships and vicissitudes without repining: others of all ranks imitated their example; and it was now seen that the element of the Gothic character, like that of an inland lake, although it may stagnate in a long protracted calm, purifies itself as it becomes agitated, and displays its latent beauty as well as strength when it is roused by storms.

CHAPTER VII.

FORGETTING that she was a bride, in her eagerness to become a queen, Ingundis would have hurried immediately from Seville on her intended mission to the Roman stations, while she recommended a similar activity to Leander in his embassy to the Byzantine Court. But the good bishop who had little notion of official despatch, and who thought, moreover, that divine aid was of much more consequence than human exertions, however energetic, would not listen to any proposition for the departure of either the princess or himself, until they had propitiated heaven and the saints by a solemn procession, by public prayers, and the exhibition of all the relics that were treasured up in all the churches; a ceremony which he wished to postpone till the anniversary of the patron Saint of Seville, and within a few days of its occurrence. Nothing but religious

considerations could have persuaded the princess to such an unwelcome delay; but imperious and hasty as she was, she would not thwart the wishes of her spiritual adviser, and consented to take a part in this previous act of devotion.

On the morning of the appointed day, every reliquary in Seville gave forth its precious store to add to the solemnity of the pageant. Hermenegild at the head of his soldiers, with Ingundis by his side, swelled the pomp; the sable troops of the priesthood, almost an army in themselves, brought up the rear; those who were unable to find room within the cathedral where the service was performed, collected on the outside; and the assembled population of Seville, at the conclusion of the prayers, made the air ring with shouts of "long live Hermenegild and Ingundis! Long live our pious, good, and charitable bishop."

Every thing passed off auspiciously, nay, it might be said that there was a miraculous manifestation of divine favour, for Leander, whose senses were probably deluded by his sanguine zeal, declared that the image of the virgin, which had previously nodded assent of his measures, assumed a complacent smile; as upon this occasion he knelt before it. After these propitiatory rites, a grand banquet was given to the church dignitaries and the chiefs of the soldiers, which

lasted till the evening, when Ingundis, whose departure had been fixed for the following morning, retired with her husband and the bishop to concert together their future plan of operations. In such discussions did they continue deeply engaged, until a servant announced that a stranger wished to have immediate access to the prince. "I am occupied with affairs of consequence," said the latter impatiently, "and must not be interrupted."

"But he who desires to have speech of you will take no denial, declaring that his mission is of the utmost importance to your welfare, and will not brook an instant delay."

"This urgent suitor must learn to wait my leisure; let him seek me as early as he pleases to-morrow,"—and with this reply he would have dismissed the servant, had not the bishop interposed, observing that the position of their affairs was critical, and it was not impossible that the applicant for admission might be a secret envoy charged with some *vivâ voce* communication from their Catholic friends at Toledo. Admitting the probability of this conjecture, the prince assented to the stranger's introduction; the servant withdrew, and returned in a few minutes ushering into the apartment a figure whose appearance occasioned Hermenegild and Ingundis to start back

with a simultaneous exclamation of surprise. It was the youth who had addressed to them the warning at the farm, and who still wore the homely garments in which he was then attired. Both were struck with such astonishment for the moment, that they could not give utterance to their thoughts, and there was a brief silence, first broken by the visitant, saying to Hemenegild, "I repeatedly told your servant that I must see you alone."

"My companions are the good bishop of Seville and the princess, my wife, both of whom are in my perfect confidence."

"But not in mine; I must see you alone, or I am dumb," said the stranger in a tone of calm decision.

Leander, a single-minded incurious man, immediately withdrew, an example which was followed, though with less alacrity, by the princess, who, as she retired, cast a scrutinising and somewhat haughty glance at the intruder. Whether Ingundis, with all her heroical qualities, still possessed her share of curiosity, the imputed failing of her sex, or that she was actuated by a germ of jealousy, for she knew the visitant to be a young and fair maiden in disguise, we cannot determine; but we must not conceal the derogatory fact, that from an adjoining chamber she quickly gained access to a

closet, whence she could distinctly hear all that passed in the apartment she had just quitted. "There may be treachery in the case," she whispered to herself, as if she thought some apology necessary for thus playing the eaves-dropper; "and it is my duty to watch over the safety of Hermenegild," with which salvo she applied her ear as close as she could to the door of the closet.

"After having so carefully, and upon more than one occasion, avoided pursuit and recognition," said the prince to his disguised visitant; "I little expected that you would thus voluntarily seek my presence. You come, I hope, to clear up the mystery that has hitherto involved you, to reveal to me who and what you are, to divulge why you followed me from Toledo to the farm, and again escaped from me after warning me against the machinations of Recared, my brother."

"I have no such disclosures to make: I affect no mystery, but the motives that have imperatively urged me to concealment upon these and other points, remain yet in full operation. Our encountering at the farm was accidental, and I evaded your pursuit, because my purpose admitted not interrogatory or delay. Nor had I any intention of tracking you to Seville, in which city my sojourning at the present moment is an occurrence equally fortuitous."

"What then is the object of your visit to me now? You declared it to be urgent and important."

"I said the truth. Is it not the intention of the princess to depart to-morrow for the Roman stations of the coast?" The prince answered in the affirmative.

"I have a measure to propose which may not only render that perilous step unnecessary, but may probably bring the war upon which you have entered to an immediate and successful termination. If you accede to my terms, I solemnly pledge myself to give you possession, within a week, of the city, castle, and garrison of Toledo."

For a moment the prince stared in the face of the speaker, as if doubting the evidence of his ears, and then, utterly unable to control his emotions at a proposition which appeared so supremely ridiculous, he threw himself back in his chair and burst into a loud laugh. This rude method of testifying his incredulity produced but a trifling effect upon the countenance of the stranger; she reddened slightly, while a look of grave but not offended dignity predominated over that expression of sorrow which usually invested her features. "Forgive me," said the prince, recovering himself; "if I cannot help doubting either your seriousness or your sanity. How can you, a single unaided maiden, disguised in the homely

garments of a boy, undertake to deliver up to me the metropolis of Spain, the impregnable fortress of Toledo?"

"I never uttered a jest in my life—I am not mad— neither am I an enthusiast or an impostor. What I have undertaken I am able and willing to perform, as pledge of which I am ready to place my life in your hands, to be forfeited if I do not fully and honourably redeem my promise. What you beheld and experienced in the quarry ought to convince you that I am neither powerless nor unworthy of trust. On that occasion I saved you from destruction; I now offer to make you king of Spain; and thus shall I partly discharge the debt of gratitude for that inappreciable favour to which I formerly alluded."

"And of which I have not the smallest recollection. Tell me, I beseech you, how, when, where——?"

"A time may come for these explanations, but for the present you must remain in darkness as to my name and quality. Have I not said that if I were known you would hate and detest me?"

"True, true," said the prince, musing, and at this moment the idea flashed upon his mind that his mysterious companion must be one of those evil spirits who were thus imagined to be constantly haunting the earth that they might tempt the

unwary to their ruin. Her first midnight appearance in the quarry with armed comrades, or rather, as he now began to surmise, with fellow demons offering secret and unhallowed worship to an inanimate stone; the strange metamorphoses in her subsequent appearance; her inscrutable power of eluding pursuit; her admission that if known she would be loathed and abhorred, with other suspicious circumstances, all seemed so strongly to confirm his misgivings that he exclaimed, "How know I that you are not an incarnate spirit seeking to delude me into some fatal snare. Will you swear that your purposes are honest and friendly? Will you kiss the cross?" and he extended towards her the handle of his battle-axe, to the extremity of which was nailed a small iron cross.

"No!" said the stranger, recoiling and averting her face.

"Ha! is it so—is it so?" shouted the prince, as he crossed himself with great rapidity. "Have I detected thee? Begone from me, thou daughter of Satan! Avaunt, thou child of Belial! I am not to be betrayed either by thy frauds or thy fascinations!"

"Mistaken and ungrateful man! you were in my power, and I saved your life even at the risk of my own: I have warned you against your secret enemies: I offer you the city of Toledo and the

crown of Spain, and I am willing to place myself and my existence in your hands as a security for the performance of my promise. Does such conduct savour of treachery, fraud or fascination?"

In this appeal there was an earnestness of voice and manner, accompanied by such an expression of ingenuous truth in the countenance of the speaker, that Hermenegild, feeling he had done her foul wrong, exclaimed, "You are right—you are right; I cannot, will not, mistrust those accents of convincing candour,—that look of unsullied innocence. But you come to me under many circumstances of suspicion,—unknown—concealed,—disguised; and before I embrace your proposition I must learn how it is to be executed, and what is to be your reward if it succeed."

"This you shall know. Listen! King Leovigild, your royal father, has hurried from Toledo, with the whole garrison, except a feeble guard, in order to crush an insurrection that has broken out in the north, where the Catholics have proclaimed you king. With three or four hundred horsemen you might soon reach the Toledan mountains undiscovered. If yourself and fifty of your dismounted followers will then commit yourselves to my guidance, I will introduce you at midnight into the city, by means of the cavern in the quarries, which communicates with subterranean tunnels

that pass under the walls of the fortress. You can then open the gates of the sleeping city, your horsemen will enter, my confederates not mean in number, nor deficient in resolution, will aid your enterprise ; the Catholics will be ready to support you, the metropolis will be surprised and taken without a struggle, and the royal forces will be so discouraged by the blow, that in all probability the whole country will gladly recognise you as king."

"By heavens! it is feasible,—it is a glorious scheme, — and wears an aspect of undoubted success if you are not mistaken as to this strange assertion that the quarries communicate with the interior of the city."

"Hundreds of times have I passed from the one to the other, and by this secret channel had the whole assemblage, which you accidentally detected, reached this place of meeting."

"This looks like proof. I implicitly believe your averment, and I will gladly commit myself to the enterprise, for suggesting which, you have not yet received your reward."

"For myself individually I demand nothing, for I shall still owe you a debt of gratitude even when I have accomplished all that I have undertaken. But, as I stated, I have confederates who require that in return for this service you shall

swear to grant that which has been often and solemnly promised to them as a recognised right. Of their claims I cannot now state the precise nature, but I pledge my existence, that you may grant them as a king, with honour to yourself and without detriment to your people."

"Then by the holy Trinity! I swear to do so."

"I would rather hear you bind yourself by some other vow."

"Then by this sacred cross——"

"No — no — no," interposed the stranger— "swear by the God of Heaven and earth, the Father of all mankind."

The prince pronounced the adjuration in the form prescribed, when his companion said, "it is well—it is well! We have now only to arrange the time and place of our meeting in the vicinity of Toledo."

This was done accordingly, and the mysterious incognita, sweetly but firmly resisting all the importunities of Hermenegild, that she should not leave him so utterly in the dark as to her name and history, bowed her head, and glided rapidly from the apartment.

Although Ingundis had condescended to ensconce herself and listen to this colloquy, she scorned to conceal her conduct from her husband, justifying it by her apprehensions of some medi-

tated treachery on the part of his visitant. The communication made by the stranger had been strictly confidential, and yet neither party seemed to feel the impropriety of its having been secretly overheard, for though both of them possessed much elevation of character, they could not lay claim to any very scrupulous delicacy. For some time they remained deliberating upon this singular proposition. The possibility of its easy execution Hermenegild was enabled to infer from what he had himself witnessed in the quarries, though he had never heard or suspected that their subterranean mazes communicated with the interior of the city; while the previous important service conferred upon him by his incognita, gave him assurance that she would neither propose what she could not execute, nor attempt to betray him into any danger.

Ingundis snatched eagerly at an enterprise which came recommended to her, not only by its audacity and romantic character, but by the glorious results at which it pointed, and the prompt termination of the war which its success would ensure. An ugly misgiving, however, still lurked in the mind of Hermenegild; he liked not the stranger's objection to swear by the cross, still less her recoiling from that sacred symbol, and he recalled various legends and traditions, recounting

how incarnate spirits had under various pretexts beguiled their victims into the bowels of the earth, whence they had never been known to emerge.

"Give me my faithful battleaxe," he exclaimed, "and I would not fear the bravest and most powerful mortal that treads the earth, but I shrink from the thought of encountering supernatural and invulnerable beings, especially in those dark quarries."

"They will not be dark," cried Ingundis with flashing eyes, "you will see before you a jewelled crown, which will be your blazing harbinger. For such a prize as this, darkness and even demons should be faced without a fear. Why the mysterious maiden should recoil from the cross I know not, but still I do not mistrust her, even if she be what you suspect. You may paralyze her unholy power by carrying with you a crucifix, and pronouncing aloud the prayer of exorcism; but if you still hesitate to commit yourself to the gloomy caverns of the earth with such a suspicious conductress, let *me* be the leader of the party which is to surprise the city, while you and your horsemen await our opening of the gates. Young as I am, I have seen a battle before now, and I feel within me the spirit that gives victory."

"No, dear and brave Ingundis!" said the prince, "if there be danger it is for me, not you to en-

counter it. By the expedient of the crucifix, and the form of exorcism all my scruples are removed, and I am both ready and eager for the execution of our enterprise."

With this view instant arrangements were commenced. Four hundred of the best mounted horsemen were selected for the expedition, fifty of the bravest and most trusty being set apart for the perilous task of surprising and capturing the city. One difficulty still remained to be surmounted. Ingundis insisted upon joining the party, and her husband was unwilling that she should needlessly expose herself to so much fatigue and danger. But the young and dauntless bride was now as inflexible in her determination to accompany him, as she had previously been in her purpose of separation, in order to undertake her mission to the Romans; when she had once decided on any measure it was vain to oppose her, and the prince gave a reluctant assent to her wishes.

Making their marches mostly by night, in order to avoid discovery, the detachment reached the mountains in the immediate vicinity of Toledo, when Hermenegild and his fifty chosen soldiers, favoured by the darkness, proceeded on foot to the place of rendezvous, which was the bridge over the Tagus, at a small distance from the quarries.

Punctual to the appointed hour and place, the fair stranger was in attendance, habited as before, like a youth of inferior station; the preconcerted signal and watchword were given and exchanged; the unknown damsel, commanding a strict silence to be observed, placed herself at their head, and they commenced their march along the banks of the river until they reached the quarries, into the labyrinths of which they presently plunged. An occasional glimmering revealed to them at first some small portion of the passages they were exploring, but they were soon involved in impenetrable darkness, and it was only by the cooler atmosphere and the more hollow echoes of their footsteps that Hermenegild imagined himself to be crossing the large vault in which he had discovered the midnight assemblage, a conjecture of which the truth was confirmed to him by his conductress.

Their path now became more narrow, tortuous, and difficult, rude steps were ascended and descended; there was nothing but the whispering voice of their unknown leader to guide them, and some of the soldiers, in spite of the silence that had been enjoined, began to murmur at this subterranean burrowing, and to express their fears of treachery or demonism. Although the prince did his best to encourage them, he was not himself by

any means free from apprehensions. Buried alive as it were, in the dark bowels of the earth, he and his brave followers were completely at the mercy of his unknown guide, who, if her purposes were foul, might be hurrying him on to some fearful and unhallowed region, the abode of evil spirits. To frustrate these and all similar schemes, he held up his crucifix, and cited aloud the prayer of exorcism, which seemed to give great confidence to his followers, who were still more encouraged when they found that they began once more to ascend. This they continued to do until upon reaching and climbing up a ladder they discovered by the dim light of the stars that they were upon *terra firma*, in a small garden flanked by a shabby-looking house on one side, and on three others by a lofty wall. Their conductress unlocked the door of the dwelling—ushered them through a narrow passage, and opened a second door, exclaiming in a glad voice to Hermenegild, as the party passed forth, "Prince! I give you joy! You are in the streets of Toledo! It must be our first care to secure the gates."

To the nearest of these she accordingly led the way; the guards, surprised and confounded, offered little or no resistance, although they had time to ring the alarum before they surrendered or fled.

"Be not uneasy," said the prince's conductress,

who never quitted his side, " my friends and confederates, prepared for the signal, will soon hasten to your support."

Scarcely had she spoken when Hermenegild found himself surrounded by armed men, who saluted him with acclamations of welcome, and hurried with him to the other gates, which were all secured with not less facility than the first. By this time the whole city was awake and afoot, several bands, collecting themselves together in the wider streets, attempted to oppose the progress of the assailants, but they were presently overpowered, and in less than in an hour Hermenegild found himself in undisputed possession of Toledo, with the exception of the castle. King Leovigild, trusting to the presumed impregnability of his capital, had left only a feeble detachment in the place, the whole of which, with the exception of the guards, at the different gates, were stationed every night in the castle. Presuming that the disturbance they heard was only some nocturnal scuffle between the Arians and Catholics, which was of not unfrequent occurrence, they very prudently determined not to sally from the fortress until daylight should enable them to see what disorders they had to repress, or what enemies to encounter.

The city being thus secured, with the sole ex-

ception of the castle, which, as the prince's guide assured him, would be compelled to surrender in less than a week from the want of provisions, he betook himself to the gate at which it had been preconcerted that the remainder of his troop should make their entrance. The appointed hour for their appearance had elapsed, and yet, to his equal surprise and disappointment, he saw no signs of either Ingundis or the horsemen. Deeming it not impossible that they might have mistaken the gate, he hurried to the others, but with no better success, nor could the messengers who were despatched in various directions by his active and friendly conductress, gather any tidings of the missing party. "I have performed all that I promised," said the stranger, who seemed to be even more anxious than the prince; "but I cannot be responsible for the consequences of this unaccountable and most sinister delay. At the sight of four hundred horsemen the little garrison in the castle would either have surrendered at discretion, or they must have been quickly starved into submission; but if they discover our weakness and rally their supporters in the city, we may yet lose all that we have won."

Quickly was it proved that these apprehensions were well founded. Day began to dawn, and nothing could be seen in any direction of the troop

that was to support the enterprise; the garrison learning the insignificant number of the band by which the city had been surprised, sallied from the castle to attack them, the Arian clergy issuing from their churches with relics and holy images in their hands, called upon the faithful to assist in expelling the heretics; and a formidable force hastened down to the gate at which Hermenegild and his men were stationed.

"All is about to be snatched from your grasp," said the prince's incognita, re-appearing at his side after a short absence, "for the present you have lost Toledo and the crown of Spain: the mode by which you entered the city is unfortunately discovered. The garrison and all the fanatics are bearing down upon you in numbers which it would be utter madness to resist. Fly! fly! but remember that your failure is not attributable to me, and that I am still your friend." With these words she disappeared, and was seen no more.

Hermenegild, however, had not been accustomed to yield, however fearful the odds to which he might be opposed. Choosing an advantageous station near the gates, he determined to await the attack, trusting that he might still hold his enemies in check until his tardy horsemen should at length come to his support. With this forlorn hope he made the most desperate exertions, felling

with his irresistible battleaxe all who came within its death-dealing range, and encouraging his men by his voice as well as example to fight bravely to the last. But against such disparity of numbers what valour could avail? Many of his little band were killed by his side, the armed townsmen who had hitherto supported him, slunk gradually from the fray; and himself and the survivers of his little band, still fighting as they retreated, were at length driven without the gates, which the garrison, fearing perhaps some ambush, or feeling themselves too weak for a *sortie*, immediately closed and barricaded. That apprehension was fortunate for Hermenegild, since it enabled him to continue his retreat unmolested, but in a paroxysm of disappointment and rage, that could find no other vent than in incessant maledictions of the officer who commanded the remainder of his troop, and had thus inexplicably deserted him at his utmost hour of need.

Of this apparent defection the cause was soon elucidated, for on his reaching a gentle eminence about a mile from the city, he saw his missing horsemen galloping towards him from the valley. Even the presence of Ingundis could scarcely restrain the choleric prince from cutting down the commander, whom he coarsely assailed with the most vituperative epithets. But a brief explana-

tion converted his vain fury into regrets as unavailing. Knowing that in the darkness of the night it was easy to miss the road to Toledo, and become entangled amid the hills, the prince himself, before he quitted his band, had engaged a goatherd by the promise of a few pieces of gold, coupled with a threat of death if he played them false, to guide the horsemen to the city. Mounted on a stout mule, the peasant, who was a stanch catholic, rode beside the commander, engaging him in a religious conversation, and had no sooner detected him to be a Goth and an Arian, than he resolved to defeat his object whatever might be its nature. With this view he not only led him widely astray, among the most intricate passes of the hills, but contrived to effect his own escape before his perfidy was discovered. Every possible exertion had been made both by Ingundis and the officer to recover the right track, but not an individual of the troop was acquainted with the country, and they had wandered backwards and forwards until the break of day, when they found once more the proper road, and were spurring forward their exhausted horses at the moment when they had encountered the prince.

No alternative was now left but to retrace their steps towards Seville, on their return to which city Hermenegild, who could bear anything with for-

titude except defeat, was plunged in a sullen silent dejection. To the ambitious Ingundis it was still more mortifying than to her husband, to have so glorious a prize snatched from their grasp at the very moment when they seemed to have secured it; but her proud indomitable spirit would not bow down to fate or fortune; assuming a confident and lofty air, she rallied and encouraged the prince, until she had roused him from his despondency, and thus did they re-enter the city of Seville, baffled in the immediate object for which they had quitted it, but bating no jot of heart or hope as to the ultimate success of the insurrection, which was now ascertained to have spread widely into the other provinces of Spain.

CHAPTER VIII.

Although the catholics enjoyed, under the mild government of Leovigild, a free toleration, which was of rare occurrence in that age, they applauded the pious rebellion of the son against an heretical father, and flocked in thousands to his standard; incensed at such traitorous ingratitude, the loyal and devout Arians hastened to the support of their legitimate monarch: Hermenegild and his royal rival, forgetting the sacred ties of nature, and only remembering that the unsuccessful combatant for a throne rarely escapes with life, struggled for victory with the instinctive fierceness of self-preservation; and the contest now raged throughout Spain in all the remorselessness of civil warfare, inflamed by religious bigotry.

Bishop Leander remained at Constantinople, negociating with the Byzantine court, which

amused him with promises of support never meant to be performed. Although Ingundis had now been some time absent on her mission to the Roman stations, no tidings had been received of her, an ominous circumstance, not only productive of the deepest disquietude to her husband, but seriously injurious to his cause. Dauntless in battle almost to a fault, but wanting fertility in expedients, and fortitude in reverses, he could neither improve success, nor repair disaster; in both of which predicaments he felt keenly the need of that quick-thoughted intelligence and persevering firmness which would have been communicated to him by his acute and heroical wife. Even in her absence, however, he felt the influences of her provident spirit. The allies to whom she had so promptly and so pressingly written, were not slow in answering the summons. The Suevi made a descent on the north-west coast; the Franks marched an army over the frontiers; both parties carried slaughter and devastation whithersoever they advanced; and at the outset the rebellious cause wore a prosperous aspect.

But Leovigild, restored as if by magic to the active energy of his youth, and commanding the troops and treasures of Spain, soon proved himself more than a match for all his enemies. Recared too, animated by the hope of supplanting his elder

brother in the succession, was transformed into an enterprising and successful commander, scouring the provinces with his cavalry, and restoring the royal authority wherever it had been subverted. Nor was Quintana, the Archbishop of Seville, wanting to his sovereign, or rather to himself, in this emergency. Conscious that his mitre and all his luxurious temporalities depended on the suppression of the rebellion, he accompanied the king's army, carrying with him the most sacred of the cathedral relics, and not scrupling at times to fabricate miracles, which produced the happiest effect upon the minds of the superstitious soldiery. Into the details of this unnatural and revolting warfare it is not our purpose to enter. Suffice it to state that the Franks and Suevi were beaten and driven back by Recared; the cities of Merida, Cordova, and Seville, were successively taken by Leovigild in person; and his rebellious son, after various defeats and escapes, was finally wounded and made prisoner in an engagement near Toledo.

At this juncture the aged monarch, whose enfeebled body had given way under the incessant fatigues of war, and the abrasion of his infuriated spirit, was confined to his couch by a severe attack of sickness; but no sooner was he apprised by the archbishop, who hastened to him with the joyful intelligence, that Hermenegild had been utterly

overthrown, and was at that moment a prisoner in the castle, than all his pristine vigour seemed to be instantly restored, and he sprang from the couch with the look and energy of a maniac, shouting in a stentorian voice—"Ha! is it so? is it so? Give me the sword of Euric the conqueror. This unnatural viper shall feel that there is no master of Toledo, no king of Spain but Leovigild!" He snatched the weapon which since the commencement of the war had ever hung by his side, and was bursting out of the chamber, when the archbishop, terrified at his furious looks and gestures, which savoured of insanity, detained him by his garment, imploring him not to embrue his hands in the blood of his child, but to be calm and patient, and leave the punishment of the delinquent to the law.

"Talk not to me of calmness and of patience," cried the agonized king. "You are no father—you never had a favourite son on whom you doated, on whom you poured out your whole loving heart, and who in return sought to pluck the crown from your head, and to plunge his sword in your bosom. Avaunt! begone! the villain shall feel my vengeance." Shaking the archbishop rudely off, he rushed through the apartments with his brandished weapon, scaring the whole household as he hoarsely bellowed, "Where

is this ungrateful wretch, this unfilial rebel, this unnatural monster, who would deluge his country in blood in order that he may dethrone his father? What! am I too old to wear a crown? too feeble to wield a sword? Ha! art thou there? have I caught thee? Apostate! traitor! parricide! now, now shalt thou feel that Leovigild is—"

By this time he had approached the prisoner, but when he discovered that he was wounded and bleeding; when he marked the fearful ravages wrought by anxiety and fatigue in his once beautiful features, he stopped short—the words he was about to utter choaked in his throat, the sword fell from his hand; after a short, sharp struggle, he tottered forwards, fell upon the neck of his son, pressed him in an ecstacy to his bosom, and bathed him in a flood of tears, exclaiming, in accents broken by his sobs, "Hermenegild, my own dear, dear Hermenegild! my brave boy! thou art wounded. O God! thou art covered with blood. What ho, there! help, help! fetch me a surgeon instantly. Why was it not done before? Oh! how flinty-hearted are the childless? Quintana did not tell me thou wert wounded." Tearing off a portion of his own garment, he hastily bandaged the arm of Hermenegild, whose rugged nature was so utterly overcome by this unexpected burst of affection, that he leant upon his father, weeping

like a child, and unable to articulate a single word.

"My poor boy," sobbed the king, lifting up his son's head, and gazing upon his features with an expression of mingled fondness and anguish, "you are sadly altered, miserably changed since last we met. But good now, my son, my son, why would you rebel against your aged father, who always loved you better than any thing else in the world, who never refused you what he had it in his power to grant? I am old, and weak, and sick, and fast falling into the grave. Why—why, my dear boy, could you not wait till I was laid in the cold earth, when my throne, my crown, my kingdom, all would have quietly become yours?"

Filled with penitence and remorse at this tender appeal, Hermenegild again sunk sobbing upon the bosom of his father, who clasped him lovingly to his heart, exclaiming, as he rained tears upon the head of the offender, "Nay, my dear boy, I meant not to distress thee. Cheer up, cheer up. I am willing to forget every thing. I forgive thee with my whole heart, and may God bestow his blessing upon thee as freely as I do mine. What! shall we live together again, and be as happy as before? Yes, yes; thou shalt superintend my falcons and mules; thou shall hunt me venison, and snare me

birds, and choose me the finest carp, and we will feast merrily in the hall, and empty the tulip-cup together, and I shall again laugh at thy jolly wine songs? Shall we, shall we, dearest Hermenegild? But see, thy wound bleeds afresh. What, ho! where is this laggard surgeon? By St. James, if they have not summoned him, the varlets shall dearly rue their negligence."

Almost as he spoke, the surgeon hurried into the apartment, when the king, reminding him of the liability incurred by unsuccessful operators,* hung anxiously over him as he examined the wound, and shed fresh tears of joy on hearing him declare that it was by no means of a dangerous nature. — Exhausted by fatigue, emotion, and loss of blood, the patient required immediate rest and repose, of which the father stood scarcely less in need than the son, for he began to sink under the paroxysm of excitement, by which he had been shaken. Not, however, until he had seen Hermenegild placed in bed, and had given strict orders for his being kept free from noise and disturbance, would the king suffer his attendants to support him back to his own couch.

* The Visigoths abandoned an unsuccessful surgeon to the family of his deceased patient, *ut quod de eo facere voluerint habeant potestatem.* — *Gibbon's Decline and Fall, cap.* 38, *note.*

Great was the commotion and deep the indignation in the palace, when it was found that Leovigild had been thus unexpectedly reconciled to a son whose offence had been deemed, even by the most lenient, utterly irremissible. All condemned that culpable weakness which consulted rather the fond dotage of the father, than the imperative duties of the king, and all sought to persuade him to the exercise of a rigorous justice. Goisvintha, inflamed by fanaticism, denounced the culprit as a heretic and apostate, to permit whose escape from condign punishment would be a flagrant insult to heaven; the archbishop, affecting a hypocritical sorrow, called upon his royal master, by all the sanctions and obligations of religion, to put so wicked a renegade to death, unless he would, once more, embrace the Arian faith.

Recared, out of a regard for appearances, would not openly advocate his brother's condemnation; though he endeavoured to poison his father's mind against him by covert intrigues and secret accusations. Nor were the nobility and chiefs of the army less urgent in insisting that justice should be allowed to take its course against a state criminal, whose offence was so utterly unprovoked, and who had entailed such signal calamities upon his country. Leovigild had been melted into an uncontrollable tenderness at the first sight of his

wounded and altered son, but his calmer judgment and his sense of regal duty convinced him that the restoration of such an offender to perfect favour might alienate his Arian subjects, and retard the great object of his present endeavour—the tranquillization of the country. To those, however, who clamoured for the death of the culprit, he reiterated, with an indignant impatience, "He is my son—he is my son—he is my son!" Nay, he would not allow him to be visited by any signal or dishonourable chastisement, but contenting himself with despoiling him of the golden armlet, the silver horse, and the diadem, the badges of his rank, he dismissed him to a decent exile at Seville, where he retained the appearance, without the reality, of his former power, and was freely allowed to profess the religion he had adopted.

From the Catholics, who, instead of viewing him as an ungrateful rebel, pardoned by an over-indulgent father, immediately began to reverence him as a martyr, he experienced marks of undiminished respect and affection, that might have soothed his sorrows, had they been susceptible of consolation. But it was not alone the alternate compunction and resentment of his soul, nor the shame and anguish of defeat, peculiarly irritating to so martial a spirit, that plunged him in the deep despondency with which he was now overwhelmed

The torturing suspense in which he had so long been kept as to the fate of his beloved Ingundis, the loss of whose society and support was felt at the present juncture with a sharper pang, preyed upon his peace, and defied all his efforts to shake off the melancholy with which he was oppressed.

He offered large rewards for her discovery, and would himself have gone in search of her, but that he had reason to believe she had embarked for Africa, which had been part of her original purpose, and he knew not in what direction to make his perquisitions. Stung with the thought that he had for ever forfeited the crown which she had been so ambitious to place upon his brow, he almost feared to encounter her, at the very moment that his lone heart pined for the missing object of its affections. In this conflict of gloomy and painful feeling he forebore his customary recreations and pursuits, shunned all society, and, mounting his horse at break of day, usually rode to a forest of Ilex pines and chesnut trees, which then stretched from the neighbourhood of Seville almost as far as Cordova. Here would he plunge into the darkest shades, and abandon himself to angry or remorseful reveries till nightfall recalled him to his home.

Upon one of those excursions he had dismounted

from his horse, and throwing himself upon a rock, so darkened with overarching boughs that he could scarcely see the runnel which gurgled at its foot, he mentally retraced the occurrences of the last few eventful months. So rapid had been their whirl, and so completely had his mind been engrossed by the harassing anxieties of war, that he had only at momentary intervals reverted to the fair Incognita who had given him possession of Toledo, and might not improbably have thus secured to him the crown of Spain, had not their scheme been so unfortunately frustrated. Upon her, and her mysterious acts and appearances, he remained for some time brooding, until he unconsciously uttered his thoughts aloud:

"Where is she?" he exclaimed, "where is this unknown maiden of the quarry, who has already rendered me such vital service, and who said so emphatically when last we parted, 'Remember, I am still your friend.' Alas! never had I more need of a friend than now. She seems to possess some preternatural power of transporting herself whithersoever she will. Where, oh where is my good angel, that she comes not to me now?"

"I am here!" said a gentle voice:—a rustling was heard in the bushes, and at the next moment the prince saw standing before him the inscrutable

being he had invoked. Never had his misgivings as to her unearthly nature been so alarming as at this instant. He started instinctively back, fixing upon her his distended eyes as if he expected to discover in her appearance some confirmation of his suspicions; but notwithstanding the gloom of the place, he could ascertain that she wore, as usual, the homely garments of a youth, and that her pale beauty, though it still disclosed touches of a proud dejection, was radiant with a more than usual benignity.

"We are well encountered, prince," said the stranger. "I was speeding to Seville to seek you, for I have tidings to communicate which it may not mislike you to hear, though they are not altogether of pleasant import."

"Pleasant!" exclaimed Hermenegild, smiling in bitter spirit; "I expect not any such. Speak! I am prepared for the worst."

"I have discovered that the Princess Ingundis lives, and is in perfect health."

"I said thou wert my good angel; and lo! thy words confirm it. Where is she—where—where, and why doth she not return to me?"

"She was detained by the Romans, and is now a prisoner in a strong castle at the promontory of Dianium, on the eastern coast."

"O these perfidious, these infernal Romans! I feared their treachery, and alas! I have now no army with which I can march to her rescue."

"I will attempt it without an army, and if I succeed not in effecting her deliverance, I will at least bring you intelligence of her welfare. This resolution had I formed from the moment that I learnt her fate; and I was speeding to Seville not only to tranquillize your mind, by apprising you where she was, but to put you in possession of my purpose. Heaven grant that it may succeed!"

"O my best and dearest benefactress! this will be a service for which I can never sufficiently reward you."

"Not so, prince, even if I accomplish all that I have undertaken, it will leave me still your debtor, and largely too."

"But may I not accompany and assist you?"

"Your presence would rather tend to frustrate than advance my enterprise. Alone will I attempt it; but if fortune favour me, alone I will not return."

"Can you then penetrate into the Roman castles as easily as into the fortress of Toledo?"

"Time will show; and as time is precious, both for the accomplishment of your wishes and of my own projects, I will now bid you an immediate farewell, imploring you to be of good courage, and to hope the best, until we meet again at Seville."

So saying, the stranger bowed with a complacent smile, disappeared behind the rock from which she had emerged, and the prince found himself once more in solitude and silence. But when he gazed around he could hardly believe in the identity of the spot, although he had never quitted it. To his buoyant and hope-elated heart every thing seemed changed. There was no gloom in the deep shades, no sadness in the solitude, nothing mournful in the silence; in sympathy with his altered feelings all nature seemed bright and cheerful; he galloped back to Seville singing lustily as he rode, and his sanguine temperament, as easily exalted as depressed, leading him to anticipate that with the possession of his dear Ingundis, he should recover some portion of his power and consequence, he continued for several weeks in a soul-cheering dream that enabled him to resume and enjoy his former pursuits and pleasures.

We have stated that when his Incognita left him in the forest, she disappeared behind the rock upon which he had been reclining. Here she remained until he was out of sight, when she pushed aside the bushes at the back of the crag, opened a concealed door, and passed into an excavation of moderate extent, dimly lighted from the small low opening which had given her admission. In this secret repository were hidden or burried various

small cases and packages, while several guitars were suspended from the roof. Drawing a spade from its place of concealment, the visitant dug up the earth in one corner, till she came to a carefully secured casket, which she opened, and advancing towards the light, selected a portion of the diamonds and jewels that blazed within it, after which she replaced and again covered it with earth. Secreting the gems thus extracted in her garments or her twisted locks, she slung a small light wooden case, as well as one of the guitars, to her neck, and then closed up the entrance to the cave, hiding it effectually with boughs and brambles, when she struck briskly into the forest in an eastern direction.

Equipped as we have described, and wearing the appearance of a pedlar youth and itinerant musician, our young traveller found little difficulty in making her way towards the promontory of Dianium on the coast of the Mediterranean. The baubles and trinkets in the small case, though not of sufficient value to tempt the spoiler, were attractive enough to procure for the bearer a welcome reception and willing customers in the towns through which she was constrained to pass: while in the country parts, where the inhabitants had either no money or no taste for trinkets, the sound of her instrument accompanied sometimes by a rustic strain, ensured her a glad greeting and friendly protection.

In this way she reached without accident or detention, the lofty hill overlooking the promontory, of which the extremity had once been occupied by the city of Dianium. Devastated, and indeed destroyed in one of the first irruptions of the Barbarians, its ruins, especially those of the Temple of Diana, whence the place had derived its name, still wore an air of melancholy grandeur as the setting sun threw its ruddy hues amid the shattered pediments, broken colonnades, and roofless houses. Beyond these were seen the towers of the Roman castle, within which Ingundis was confined, the new town which had risen up around the station, a lofty pharos, and the tranquil waters of the Mediterranean, burnished by the rays of the evening sun. Anxious to gain admittance before nightfall, the young traveller advanced through the straggling ruins until she reached the remains of the forum.

Over this once busy spot, now covered with rank weeds and grass, there reigned a gloomy silence, only broken by the hootings of a solitary owl, which had ensconced itself in the fissures of a dilapidated altar in the centre of this scene of desolation. Here the pilgrim entered one of the ruined buildings, and beneath the capital of a subverted column buried the jewels she had previously concealed about her person, only reserving two or three for her immediate purposes; after

which precaution she boldly made her way to the castle gates, alternately displaying her pedlar's ware and playing upon her guitar. Some of the soldier's wives and other inhabitants immediately gathered round her to bargain for her gewgaws, and she found no difficulty in ascertaining from one of her female customers, that the Gothic princess was confined in the great tower of the castle. Content with this information, she sought and obtained a lodging for the night, and on the following morning procured access to the keeper of the tower, offering him a handsome bribe if he would admit her for a few minutes to his prisoner. The knave took her gold, but instead of complying with her request, gave information of the occurrence to the governor, who commanded her to be brought before him, and being confirmed in his suspicions of her purpose by her unsatisfactory answers, ordered her to be imprisoned until his further pleasure should be known.

Thus inauspicious was the commencement of an enterprise which threatened to consign the fair Incognita to a permanent participation in the captivity she came to terminate, for several weeks elapsed and she was still detained without any intimation as to her ultimate fate. At the expiration of this period, however, a new governor arrived at Dianium, who ordered her to be discharged.

Under the pretence of thanking him for his clemency she obtained a private audience, and tendering the rare jewels she had concealed about her person, offered to give him ten times as many more of equal value if he would liberate, or connive at the escape of Ingundis, whom his churlish predecessor had incarcerated, contrary to all the laws of the nation.

Fond of jewels, the quality of which he well understood, and unable to resist so tempting a bribe, the governor consented; observing that if inquiry were made, he might easily declare there was no such prisoner in the castle, at the time of his assuming the command. The precious stones which had been secreted in the ruins of the old town were produced, examined, and approved, and in the dusk of evening Ingundis, scarcely trusting the evidence of her senses, received a visit from the mysterious stranger, who threw over her a dark mantle with a hood, enjoined her to observe a strict silence, led her down stairs, accompanied her across the court-yard, passed with her through the great gates, and urging her briskly forwards until they had reached the ruins of the old town, exclaimed, "Princess! we need no longer be silent. I congratulate you, and as we advanced hither I have already offered up my thanks to heaven for your recovered liberty."

CHAPTER IX.

GREAT as was the astonishment of Ingundis at being thus suddenly liberated by means of the stranger, whom she had instantly recognised, it was exceeded by her delight at the recovery of her freedom. All the reserve and dignity which usually marked her deportment, and which always seemed at variance with the tenderness of her years, vanished in the wild exhilaration of the present moment, and she bounded forwards with joyous heart and elastic step, as if she could not too rapidly recede from her detested prison. Like an uncaged eagle, her spirit seemed eager to spread its wings and soar over the heights that rose before her; in the rapidity of her flight she left her panting liberator far behind; nor was it until the castle was hidden from sight by the interposition of the hill, that she would sufficiently believe

in the reality of her escape to pause awhile and suffer her companion to rejoin her. "We have nothing to apprehend," said the latter, "nor need we thus timorously urge our flight. The governor of Dianium is privy to our escape; pursuit will not be attempted; and if it were, it would be useless, for I shall presently conduct you through the by-ways and unfrequented tracks, scarcely known to any other wayfarers."

"Only provide me with the means of killing myself," cried Ingundis, "and I shall be secured against the possibility of recapture. Death is a thousand times preferable to imprisonment."

"I have no arms but these," said her companion, displaying two valuable jewels which she had still retained. "It was by such weapons that I effected your liberation, and by the same means do I hope to restore you safely to Seville and to your husband."

"It is well, it is well," replied the princess. "Galling as was my late confinement, and deep as the iron of my chains had entered into my soul, I found a stern pleasure in combating with my fate. I shed no tear, I uttered no sigh, not even in secret; but if I were again to be plunged into captivity, I fear that my proud heart, though it might not bend, would quickly break."

In compliance with the earnest request of In-

gundis, who was now sufficiently confident of her escape to be anxious to learn the means by which it had been accomplished, her companion related the incarceration she had herself suffered, and the manner of her bribing the new governor, interrupting the fervent acknowledgments which her statement elicited by proceeding to detail the occurrences of the civil war, the defeat and capture of Hermenegild, and his present exile at Seville. Of all these important events Ingundis had remained in ignorance, and her profound emotion, though she was too proud to betray it, was commensurate with the disastrous nature of the tidings. To see all her ambitious schemes so quickly and so utterly subverted, was almost a counterpoise to the delight of her recovered freedom, and she walked forward for a considerable time in a wrapt silence, already revolving in her lofty and indomitable mind new plans and fresh enterprises for the fulfilment of her towering hopes.

"The brave Franks," she mentally ejaculated, "ought to have been a match, even single handed, for the Visigoths. Supported by the Suevi and the insurgent Catholics of Spain, they should have been irresistible: and so they shall be! I will see to it myself. I will see to it myself!" Vainglorious and even ridiculous as this boast may

seem with reference to the age, sex, and situation of the speaker, it sprung from the confidence of a spirit which, feeling its own powers, opposes itself to adverse fortune with a more obstinate energy, and by its persevering audacity not unfrequently commands a success which inferior minds would scarcely presume to hope.

In such reveries did Ingundis beguile the journey, anticipating the pleasure of again meeting the prince, and devising measures for the re-establishment of her fallen fortunes, when on reaching the foot of a gentle eminence, she felt overcome with fatigue, and proposed that they should rest awhile in the shade of some cork tree that grew beside a small transparent sheet of water at a trifling distance from the path they were pursuing. Here they seated themselves accordingly, when the companion of the princess, gazing upon her with a sweet smile, yet not altogether free from sadness, exclaimed, "You have anticipated my wish. It was my desire that we should sit down together in some such shady and sequestered spot, for I have much to communicate, and it need not now be any longer withheld. From the summit of the hill before us you will behold Seville; in the course of this day you will be restored to your husband; ere the sun be set I shall probably be sailing from the coast of Spain,

and it is scarcely possible that I should ever again behold either yourself or the prince. Both of you have often importuned me to state who and what I am; the circumstances which prevented my complying with your request no longer exist, I am about to relate to you my history."

"O with what anxious curiosity shall I listen to it!" exclaimed Ingundis; "but why could you not sooner make this disclosure?"

"First, because it might have deeply involved the safety of others; and, secondly, because I wished to preserve your respect and esteem until the moment of our final separation. I have said that if you knew my real quality you would hate and detest me!"

"Hate and detest my bravest and generous liberator? Impossible! impossible!"

"Speak not so confidently until you have heard my story. Listen, I am a Jewess!" So bigoted and inveterate was the horror then entertained of the proscribed tribe of Israel, that Ingundis involuntarily started aside with a slight shudder, and crossed herself.

"Was I mistaken?" asked the stranger, not in a tone of reproach, but with a look and accent of sorrow rather than of anger.

Ashamed of the antipathy she had betrayed, and smitten with quick compunction as she re-

called the inappreciable services which the stranger had conferred both upon Hermenegild and herself, Ingundis seized her hand and pressed it to her heart, exclaiming, "Forgive me, my friend, my benefactress, my preserver! you will ever be entitled to my deepest gratitude."

"You have been taught from your youth upwards to loathe me and my whole tribe; you cannot help it, nor can I regret as a fault that which I pity as an error and misfortune. Enough of this. You will perhaps have conquered some portion of your repugnance when you have heard my history. Let me repeat the words with which I commenced it, for I am proud of them: once more then, I am a Jewess. Before I was born, my mother saw a vision in the night announcing that the daughter to whom she was about to give birth should confer some signal benefit on the scattered sons of Israel. Its nature was not revealed, but both my parents had such implicit confidence in the prediction, that they named me Esther, hoping I might one day rival the exploits of my illustrious predecessor, the wife of Ahasuerus. Balthazar, my father, the best, most generous, most affectionate of men, being descended from a branch of the ancient Maccabees, thought it the more likely that one of his race should be chosen to give a new benefactor to the oppressed children of Abraham. In this convic-

tion I was educated, in this I remain a firm believer, proud of my illustrious descent, and of the purpose for which I am reserved, but sorrow-stricken and subdued in spirit by the degraded situation of my tribe, and by the humiliations to which I am myself compelled to submit until the hour shall arrive for the performance of my commission.

"Among the Hebrews who were attracted by the wealth and great population of Toledo to make it their place of residence, my father was the most eminent and successful, accumulating a large fortune by general trade, but more especially by his traffic in jewels, of which the Goths are immoderately fond. In proportion as our people grew wealthy by their industry and spirit of adventure, they were marked out for spoliation, insult, and oppression. Disabilities and indignities of all sorts were heaped upon them; to be thought rich was to be marked for plunder, perhaps for death; so that they were obliged, for the protection of their lives and property, to herd together in the meanest quarter of the city, and to affect in their persons and houses an abject poverty. Even their synagogue, which had been connived at rather than tolerated, was shut up; they were prohibited, under pain of death, from meeting together for the pur-

poses of worship; and strictly forbidden from appearing in the streets during the celebration of any of the Christian festivals. By an unfortunate forgetfulness, my father happened to transgress this order at the moment when a procession of priests and relics were passing from the cathedral; the indignant cry of 'Death to the Jew!' was instantly raised; assailed by the infuriated populace with staves and stones, he was beaten to the ground, severely wounded, and would have been inevitably despatched, had not Prince Hermenegild reached the spot, at this critical moment, on his return from hunting. No sooner had he learnt the cause of the affray, than he bestrode the prostrate body of my father, beating off the assailants with his spear, and exclaiming, 'What! a hundred upon one, ye cowards! Back, back! it were a foul offence to commit murder, even upon a Jew, in the presence of the holy relics.' At the same time he assisted my father, not without imminent danger to himself, to crawl into a house, the door of which was humanely opened to him: thus by his courage and humanity preserving to me the best of parents, and saving me from the fate of being a forlorn and lonely orphan. Said I not, 'sooth, when I declared he was entitled to my eternal gratitude, that he had conferred upon me a service which I could

never repay?—Oh! if you knew my dear, dear father, even though you are not his daughter, you would feel for him as I do."

"Were I to judge of his merits," said the princess, "by the fervour of your gratitude, and the extent of your friendly offices to Hermenegild and myself, I should indeed surmise him to be no ordinary mortal. But proceed with your story; there is much that is mysterious to be yet unravelled."

"To secrete more effectually his jewels and hoarded treasures from the hand of rapine, my father dug a deep vault in the little garden of our tenement. While thus occupied, the ground gave way beneath him, and he was precipitated into a natural chasm of the rock, upon exploring which it was found to communicate with various fissures and crevices that passed beneath the city walls, and finally opened upon a huge cavern amid the quarries. Nothing, as it immediately occurred to the discoverer, could be more expressly adapted for the purpose of a hidden synagogue, since it might be reached from the interior of the city, even after the gates were shut, with scarcely a possibility of its detection. A sunken ladder facilitated the descent from the vault, the subterranean passages were rendered more accessible, and the Jews of Toledo, willingly braving the punishment

denounced against them, were enabled to betake themselves to a place of worship, without the cognizance of their cruel oppressors."

"But what was that senseless block of stone, to which, as I have heard from Hermenegild, you all did homage?"

"I should have forgotten to explain that circumstance, but for your inquiry. When the ancestors of our family were finally expelled from Jerusalem under the Emperor Hadrian, they brought away with them that fragment of the temple, which they have since conveyed with them in their wanderings, though it has often remained buried for several years together, until it could be produced with safety. In the neighbourhood of Toledo it had been thus, for a long time, committed to the earth; but when the cavern we had found offered a secure sanctuary, it was conveyed thither at night, not to receive any idolatrous homage, as your speech would intimate; but to be kissed as a precious and sacred relic, to be reverenced as the sole existing remnant of the mighty glories of Jerusalem. Our festivals were duly kept in this covert synagogue, that which we celebrated with the greatest splendour being the feast of Purim, instituted in remembrance of the deliverance of the Jews effected by Esther. It was, and is believed by our whole tribe, that I am predestined

to confer upon them some similar, though perhaps less signal service; my father and his friends, therefore, contributed the stock of jewels in which they traded, to deck me out on these occasions with a becoming splendour; our people glad to compensate themselves for the squalid poverty which they were obliged to assume in public, came to these meetings in handsome garments, enjoying by the display of their wealth, a triumph over their oppressors, which was not the less keenly relished, because it was stealthy; and they wore arms, because it had been resolved that as death was denounced against the frequenters of such assemblages, they would unhesitatingly sacrifice any chance discoverer of their nocturnal rites. Thus were we occupied when the prince placed his life in peril by his casual detection of our proceedings. I had fortunately recognised him, and impelled by gratitude, rather than by the dictates of that obedience which was due to the orders I had received, I guided him through the labyrinths of the quarry, and joyfully preserved the preserver of my parent.

"As my father had extensive dealings, both in money and jewels, with the Archbishop of Toledo, he was often secretly admitted into his palace, in one of which occasions he overheard him conversing with Prince Recared, and gathered enough

to convince him that the latter was plotting against the peace and safety of his brother. Thus was I enabled, when we accidentally encountered at the farm, to warn Prince Hermenegild. In the various loans which my father had advanced to the bishop on the security of his lands and revenues, he had not been governed by interested motives, so much as by a patriotic anxiety to liberate our community from the heavy oppression under which it groaned, and to procure for them a perfect freedom of commerce, as well as a participation in the rights and immunities enjoyed by the other citizens. Repeatedly had this promise been given; it was renewed and covenanted with every fresh advance, but its performance was constantly evaded. On the outbreaking of the civil war, my father, having immediate need of money, applied to the bishop for a partial repayment of his heavy debt. 'My good Balthazar,' said the prelate, chuckling and smiling ironically as he spoke, 'I must request that you will strike my name from your books. Deeming it necessary, when these unhappy hostilities commenced, to propitiate the favour of heaven by evincing a proper christianlike detestation of the Jews; I have procured from the king a decree which he has just signed, and of which, as a special favour, I will allow you the first perusal.' With these words he

put an official proclamation in his hands, by which the Christian inhabitants of Spain were absolved from all debts due to the Jews; in consideration of which remission the parties thus favoured were urged to testify their devotion and gratitude by donations to the different shrines, particularly to that of St. James's, and their loyalty by a zeaous support of their legitimate monarch. 'We are quits, Israelite!' cried the bishop with a laugh of triumph; 'and thus having so satisfactorily cleared off my old arrears, thou wilt not surely object to my beginning a new score.'

"Overwhelmed as he was by this monstrous and wholesale robbery, my father had spirit enough to exclaim: 'Hold, sir, hold; for in spite of your pontifical robes, I may not be able to command myself if you add insult to falsehood and spoliation. I am a ruined man, ruined by your shameless dishonesty, but I am still a descendant of the noble Maccabees, and ten thousand times would I rather be as I am,—Balthazar, the plundered and bankrupt Jew of Toledo, than Quintana its perjured and fraudulent archbishop. So much for my own wrongs, to which I could, however, submit with patience, if I thought that you meant to redeem your reiterated and solemn pledges, by conferring upon my tribe its just rights and immunities.'—'Most worthy, but somewhat abu-

sive Balthazar,' said the pontiff; 'though our religion prescribes to us truth and honour in our general dealings, there are two parties whom we are permitted to cozen and to spoil, namely, the Devil and a Jew. I believe that I have done an acceptable service to heaven, as I am sure I have to myself, in depriving you of your ill-gotten wealth, and your mis-believing brethren of their anticipated privileges. Begone and tell them so, and beware how you desecrate the holy walls of my palace by re-appearing within them. Avaunt! thou infidel!'

"No sooner was our community acquainted with the iniquitous decree which had gone forth against them, than they unanimously determined to withdraw themselves from such flagrant robbery, and to quit the soil of Spain. The sacred stone was covertly removed to the coast and shipped for Africa, and now it was that I fondly believed the moment to have arrived when my commissioned purpose was to be executed, and I was to afford succour to the afflicted people of Israel. If I could give Prince Hemenegild possession of Toledo, by means of the subterranean communication with the city, which there was no longer any motive for concealing, I doubted not that he would gladly pledge himself to the reversal of the late nefarious decree, as well as to a formal grant of

those rights and privileges which had been so sacredly promised, and to which we were so fully entitled. Sanguine in the success of this project, I discarded the mean garments I usually wore, and arraying myself, for my better protection while travelling, in the dress of a humble youth, I made my way to Seville, saw the prince, and stipulated the conditions on which I was to give him possession of Toledo, and as I then believed, of the crown of Spain. How unfortunately our scheme miscarried you already know.

"Soon after this failure a singular incident occurred, which was doubly gratifying to my father, because it restored to him most unexpectedly the fortune of which he had been robbed, while it wore the appearance of a retributive judgment upon the knavish archbishop. On his accompanying from the capital the royal army, Quintana carried with him many of the relics belonging to the different shrines. During his absence, a crowd of pilgrims from the holy land, of itinerant monks, cripples, beggars, and other lawless troops of marauders and vagabonds collected at Toledo for the anniversary celebration of the festival of St. James. From some cause which, perhaps, the archbishop could well explain, the miracles and cures usually wrought at the shrine of that saint, did not take place, a mark of heavenly displeasure which was

attributed to the sacrilegious removal of the relics. By his apostacy from Catholicism, the prelate had already rendered himself odious, and the incensed fanatics, instigated not less by hatred and disappointment than by the hope of plunder, resolved to attack and destroy his palace. My father became acquainted with their design. He disguised himself as one of their number, and while the infuriated mob were plundering the cellars, or destroying the furniture, my father hastened to the secret cabinet, and selected from the jewels there deposited, many which he could identify as his own, together with others of nearly sufficient value to cover the full amount of his debt.

"Nothing now detained us in Spain but the necessity of withdrawing our effects, for which purpose I made several journeys to the coast, in company with my father, always wearing my present disguise. From one of our wandering tribe, many of whom are itinerant minstrels and pedlars, I learnt your detention at Dianium, and instantly resolved to evince still further my gratitude to prince Hermenegild, by attempting your rescue, for the accomplishment of which object, my father gladly placed his jewels and treasures at my disposal. As Spain is infested with many robbers, exclusive of the pious marauders who never hesitate to despoil a Jew, we are obliged to travel

through by-ways and unfrequented paths, as well as to provide secret depositories where we may conceal ourselves and our treasures on any sudden emergency. To one of these I had betaken myself in order to procure jewels for effecting your deliverance, when accident brought Hermenegild to the spot, and I communicated to him my design. And now have I not only elucidated all that seemed mysterious in my conduct, but explained to you why I was compelled to leave you so long in ignorance of my real name and quality."

"Generous and grateful girl!" exclaimed Ingundis, "you have imposed a weight of obligation upon Hermenegild and myself which we could never repay, even were we seated upon the throne, still less in our present humiliating circumstances."

"What! have you forgotten the preservation of my dear father? I have only discharged a debt of gratitude. And will you now shudder and shrink from me because I am a Jewess?"

"Oh no, no, no, my liberator and my benefactress!" cried Ingundis, pressing her to her bosom. "But tell me, if your father loves you as he is loved, how could he allow you to wander alone from Seville to Dianium?"

"He believes, as I do myself, that I am a chosen instrument in the hand of Heaven, and that no serious harm can happen to one who is ever in its holy keeping."

As a devout enthusiasm lighted up her countenance, she fixed her soft and lustrous eyes upon the sky, and by the motion of her lips seemed to be offering up an inaudible but fervent prayer.

"And where is your father, now?" asked the princess, after a pause.

"It was his purpose to remain in Spain until he had completed the removal of his effects, and then to withdraw to Joppa, in Palestine, whither I was to follow. In the vicinity of that city some ruins of the ancient tombs of the Maccabees still exist. Near these it has always been the wish of my father to close his days, in order that his bones might be mingled with those of his illustrious ancestors. That I should have so long been prevented from joining him by my detention at Dianium, will doubtless be a subject of regret to him, but not of alarm, for his confidence in the high purpose for which I am reserved, is as unalterable as my own. In the river of Seville there are always vessels bound for the coast of Africa. On board one of these I shall immediately embark, nor have I a shadow of apprehension as to my being safely restored to my father, for the same great power that sent the pillar of cloud and of fire to direct the Israelites in the wilderness, will guide its chosen instrument in her wanderings over the pathless deep."

Ingundis could not help thinking that her com-

panion was infatuated with a somewhat presumptuous illusion, but the lofty enthusiasm of her countenance was tempered with such sweet touches of humility and sorrow, that it was impossible to gaze upon her without a blended feeling of admiration and respect which almost amounted to reverence. Again did the princess pour forth the most heartfelt acknowledgments for the services conferred both upon herself and Hermenegild; and declaring that she had now recovered from her fatigue, and was anxious to obtain once more a sight of Seville, they quitted the shade of the cork-trees and the margin of the clear lake by which they had been seated, and began to ascend the hill.

CHAPTER X.

At sight of the lofty tower of Seville new schemes and hopes thronged with accelerated rapidity into the mind of the exulting Ingundis. Filial duty, natural ties, the sanctions of treaties, the claims of truth and gratitude all vanished before the workings of a reckless and unprincipled ambition which heeded nothing but the gratification of its own wishes. "My heart already feels as if it belonged to a queen seated upon a throne," whispered the aspiring girl to herself. "It tastes beforehand of the joys of royalty, as well as the pleasures of revenge. On the head of the furious and implacable Goisvintha I will heap coals of fire by the apparent magnanimity with which I shall forgive the outrages she made me suffer, only compelling her to do homage at my feet, and to witness my exaltation to the throne

from which she will have been driven by my exertions. As to her attendants, who presumed to lay violent hands upon a daughter of Sigibert and Brunechild, upon Ingundis, the princess of the Franks, they shall be publicly scourged and branded, previously to their being driven into perpetual exile. Nor shall these treacherous Romans escape. My brave Hermenegild—oh, how I shall be delighted once more to see him, and to be his counsellor in a new and more prosperous war! My brave Hermenegild shall drive into the sea those haughty intruders upon our soil: and as to the castle of Dianium, the accursed place of my captivity, not one stone of its walls shall be left standing upon another!"

As she indulged in these vain-glorious reveries, her exalted imagination transformed every surrounding object into some appropriate accessory of her triumph. Each bough that impended over her head enwreathed itself into a crown; the branch of wild-olive that she used as a fan—for she was heated by the rapidity of her advance—assumed the semblance of a sceptre; the trees of the grove through which she was passing seemed to be her tall body-guards; while the rustling of the wind amid their leaves sounded in her ears like the flourish of clarions and glad instruments saluting her in her triumphant progress.

In this state of ecstatic anticipation did she press forward, too much wrapt in her own lofty dreams to answer, or even to hear the observations of her companion, when as she reached the city walls her reverie was dissipated, and her attention arrested by the appearances of bustle and agitation within the town. The ramparts and the tops of the houses were crowded with people, and on the summit of the tower she could discern several figures upon whom the eyes of the whole assemblage seemed to be eagerly riveted. One of these attired in the robes of an ecclesiastical dignitary, seemed to be reading from an open book to a second who sat beside a large block of wood, divested of his upper garments, and having his head uncovered; while a bare-armed gigantic man stood beside them with a glittering axe poised upon his shoulder. Gazing anxiously upon the scene before her, which indicated some extraordinary crisis in the city, Ingundis still advanced without asking any questions, until she had nearly reached the foot of the tower which abutted upon the walls, when she inquired the meaning of the spectacle that seemed to excite so general and so extraordinary a sensation. "Truly, you must be a stranger and a traveller," was the reply, "or you would know that prince Hermenegild, having a second time rebelled against his father, and

again been defeated and taken prisoner, has been condemned to death, and is about to be beheaded on the top of yonder tower."

Petrified with horror at this appalling intelligence, the princess was transfixed to the spot on which she stood, every sinew being suddenly braced to an unnatural tension, her hands convulsively clasped, and her starting eyes riveted to the seated figure at the top of the tower, whom she had no sooner recognised to be indeed her loved Hermenegild, than she uttered a piercing scream, which as it thrilled through every ear, attracted instantly the looks of her unhappy husband. Leaping from his seat, he stretched towards her his arms, and shouted out her name, his whole frame shaking with the most violent emotion.

The princess being now known to the surrounding populace, thousands of eyes which had been previously bent upon the tower, were turned towards this new object of their curiosity and compassion. Conscious of the general attention she engrossed, the proud Ingundis, who had always affected a character of stoicism in every trying crisis, resolved upon this occasion to show herself superior to the utmost malice of fate and fortune. With a desperate struggle she endeavoured to force her features into a stern composure; no tear glistened in her fixed and staring eye, no groan

escaped from her, but in spite of herself her cheeks and lips assumed a ghastly paleness, her nostrils were distended, her mouth was involuntarily drawn back so as to disclose a portion of her teeth, and her whole countenance became terrible with a suppressed horror. Agonising indeed to the whole assemblage was the pause that now ensued. The priest was seen to be earnestly expostulating with the condemned man; there was an appearance of irresolution about the governor of the city, who was observed to confer with his officers on the top of the tower; and it was believed for a moment that the execution would not take place. A whisper to this effect ran through the crowd, whose joy was legible in their looks, though its expression was hushed by an intense anxiety. Vain were their hopes, and not less quickly than painfully were they dissipated.

The governor and his staff withdrew to one corner of the platform, Hermenegild returning to his seat, laid his head upon the block, and the executioner prepared to raise the fatal axe. Ingundis could behold no more, the contest with nature was not to be longer maintained; her face became frightfully distorted, she burst into a shriek of wild hysterical laughter that thrilled all those who heard it, and fell into the arms of Esther, writhing with convulsions.

In a few minutes afterwards her wretched and misguided husband had ceased to live. At a single blow his head was severed from his body; a shuddering groan attested the anguish of the Catholic population, who already viewed him as a martyr: while the callous Arians, with whom not even his death could expiate his apostacy, raised a shout of cruel triumph, and filled the air with cries of "Death to all traitors and renegades! Long live king Leovigild!"

From the moment that the unhappy prince had seen Esther in the forest, and anticipated the quick restoration of Ingundis, his whole remaining life had been a series of errors, or rather of unjustifiable offences against his father. Tired with the hope of retrieving his fallen fortunes before the arrival of Ingundis, he listened a second time to the seductions and sophistry of the Catholic priests, who soon moulding his weak and ductile mind to their purpose, effaced from it all recollection of the king's clemency, and persuaded him that the paramount interests of the true faith commanded him to make another attempt at removing from Spain the stigma and the curse of being governed by an Arian monarch. Urged by what he was taught to consider an imperative duty, he sent messengers to the Suevi and the Franks, pressing a second invasion of the country. These

despatches were intercepted and conveyed to Leovigild, who wrote to his deluded son, warning him that a perseverance in such treachery would only entail certain destruction upon his head, and imploring him to dismiss his evil advisers. Kindness and counsel were, however, thrown away upon one who was impelled in his headlong career by the infatuations of bigotry. A second time proclaimed king by the impatient Catholics of Merida, he placed himself at the head of the insurgents, was totally defeated in the first engagement with the royal troops, and carried prisoner to Seville.

When this occurred the king was confined to his bed at Toledo by a severe indisposition, which was now aggravated by the importunities, arguments, and menaces of Goisvintha, Recared, the archbishop, and the principal courtiers, all clamouring for the death of Hermenegild as the sole means of crushing the rebellious spirit of the Catholics, and securing the peace of the kingdom. That the offender had forfeited every claim to forbearance, and that so long as his life should be spared he was likely to remain a firebrand in the state, Leovigild could not deny, neither could he forget that he was the son on whom he had always doated, whom he still loved in spite of his flagrant ingratitude and repeated misdeeds. In this conflict of feeling he made a sort of compromise with

his tormentors, by signing a warrant for the execution of the prince, in case he should refuse to abjure Romanism, and to return to the Arian faith. Of his accepting life upon such easy terms he never entertained a doubt, and thus did he hope to silence his implacable enemies in the palace, to win back a wanderer to the true faith, and to preserve his brave boy, as he still loved to call him. In the very applicability of that epithet he should have anticipated the failure of his scheme.

Hermenegild was of too proud, too dauntless a spirit to purchase safety at the expense of truth and honour. In vain did the Arian priest renew his prayers, even at the place of execution. Not for an instant did the object of his solicitations waver from his stern resolve; the menaces of his enemies, and the entreaties of his friends were alike ineffectual; he remained inflexible in his adherence to the doctrines he had embraced. But when he heard the scream and beheld the form of his beloved Ingundis, his fortitude deserted him for a single moment, and a longing for life sent a spasmodic thrill to his heart; his resolution, however, as instantly returned, and her unexpected presence seemed even to infuse a fresh and firmer courage into his soul. "No!" he exclaimed, "The heroic Ingundis would be the first to

despise me as a cowardly and unworthy recreant, if I could barter my religion and my honour for a few years longer existence. She shall see that I know how to die. Executioner, I am ready !"

Such was the death of Hermenegild, whom our impartial reason may well designate as an unfilial and ungrateful rebel, but whose constancy in prefering death to an adoption of the Arian communion, has won for him in the Catholic church the long enduring honours of a royal martyr and a saint.*

Upon the ear of his sick and aged father who had never imagined that he would thus obstinately reject the means of preservation, the news of his execution fell like a thunderbolt. From that moment he was never seen to smile, but sunk into a pitiable prostration of spirits, alternating with occasional bursts of fury, during which he drove from his presence with fierce revilings all those who had been instrumental in procuring the death of Hermenegild. The Catholics who had instigated and supported his rebellion, and whom experience had proved to be irreclaimable by tole-

* The tower in which *Saint* Hermenegild was put to death is still existing, and is always pointed out to travellers.

ration and gentle usage, became hateful in his sight, and were smitten with a sore and general persecution.*

With the queen, as well as with the archbishop and Recared, Leovigild was engaged in almost perpetual altercation, and in addition to the trials of sharp sickness, and all these sources of domestic discomfort, the remorseful monarch was haunted with religious horrors, under the notion that he was condemned to inevitable perdition as the murderer of his son. Although he now hated the archbishop, he made confession to him of his sins as well as of his fears, and the prelate, implored for him plenary remission and absolution, in the name of the omnipotent Deity, and of his Son Jesus Christ; for the presumptuous form of "*I* absolve thee," was not arrogated by the clergy till a later period.†

* A measure which led to the emigration of great multitudes of the Vascons, inhabiting the countries of Guipuscoa and Navarre, who took forcible possession of Acquitaine, which thence obtained the name of Vasconia, or Gascony.

† By the following passage from Ambrose, bishop of Milan in the *fourth* century, it would seem that the power was hardly recognised at all in that age.—"Do not reckon upon obtaining any absolution during your mortal career, for whosoever should profess to have the power of extending it to you would be deceiving you. Since you have sinned against God, from him only are you to look for pardon."

All was unavailing: comfort was a stranger to the soul of the afflicted father, and his bodily health grew rapidly worse. One only and sad consolation was left to him. The arms and armour of his "brave boy" were placed by his bed-side, and he found a mournful pleasure in handling and toying with them all day long, as he fondly recalled the exploits of their former wearer, of whom he was perpetually talking. He had even commanded to be brought to him the clothes worn by the deceased on the day of his execution, which he put on, whenever he was well enough to quit his bed, and stuck his son's battle-axe in his belt. On these occasions it was perilous for any of those to approach who had counselled his death, for though weak and exhausted, he was easily excited to a delirium of rage. When unable to rise, he would gaze from the window upon Hermenegild's war-horse, which was led round the castle court for that purpose, or play with his dogs and falcons, talking to them about their late master, while he wept and uttered lamentations for his loss as if they could sympathize with him in his sorrows.

Thus sinking rapidly into the grave, he was awakened one night by a violent thunder-storm, and imagining in the bewilderment of the moment, that the vengeance of heaven was about to over-

take him for the murder of his son, he jumped from the window of his room upon a broad projecting ledge that ran round the lofty tower in which he slept, and overhung without any defence, the fearful depths of the castle ditch. Tempest, rain, and thunder raged around the ramparts as if they would batter them to the ground; at one time the whole fortress was shrouded in impenetrable darkness, during which the terrors of the night seemed to be increased by the din of the warring elements, the crashing of the broken cork-tree that overshadowed the keep, and the flapping of the banner that surmounted it;—and anon the vast and lofty masses of the castle were distinctly, though momentarily revealed by the flashes of the lightning that played menacingly around them.

In these brief intervals it was terrible and even awful to behold the aged monarch upon the edge of the dizzy precipice, attired in his night garments, his white hair streaming to the wind, his cheeks stained with weeping, and his arms uplifted to the sky, as with a wild impassioned energy he hoarsely shouted, "Strike me, O Lord! strike me with thy thunderbolts, and extinguish me and my miseries at once. Take me, O take me to the brave boy whom I have sacrificed. I hoped to have had him by my side at the dread hour of death, but life without him is insupportable, and I wish to die.

Oh! what were the sorrows of David for the loss of Absalom, compared to mine?—I am guilty, and here I stand. Strike! strike! and let me again see and embrace my poor murdered boy. He was my right hand in battle, and my joy, my delight at the feast. No more shall I hear his cheerful voice, nor gaze upon his manly face: no more shall we quaff the golden tulip-cup together. All day long am I tormented with remorse. I dream of him in the night—I awake—my pillow is steeped in tears, and I stretch out mine arms in vain. Strike me then, in mercy, O Lord! for I can bear this anguish no longer."

Exhausted with his paroxysm he sunk down upon the ledge, where his attendants soon afterwards found him, insensible and drenched with rain. He was re-conveyed to his bed, and the deliverance he had implored, though not granted to him at the moment, was accelerated by exposure to the elements, and the vehement excitement he had undergone. He sunk into a lethargic state, and in two days afterwards tranquilly expired.

When Ingundis recovered from the convulsive fit into which she had been thrown at sight of the preparations for her husband's execution, she found Esther, the Jewess, hanging affectionately over her, not offering vain consolations, but counselling

her to return without loss of time to her father, king Sigibert, and to bear her misfortunes as became the daughter of the heroical queen Brunechild. To this advice she listened in silence, until her companion exclaimed, as she pressed her immediate departure for Gaul, "Alas! what is now left to you in Spain?"

"Revenge!" cried the haughty princess, starting upon her feet, while her eyes flashed with a triumphant fierceness. "Blood shall be shed for the memory of Hermenegild, not tears. If the child to which I shall shortly give birth should prove to be a son, he may live to sit upon the throne that his father failed to win. Away with unavailing grief! Henceforward, will I think of nought but vengeance."

Fearful of being detained by the orders of Leovigild, should she attempt to make her way through Spain, Ingundis embarked on board a vessel bound for the coast of Gaul; but misfortunes still pursued her. The ship was captured by an imperial galley and carried to Constantinople, where the ill-fated princess was committed to prison. A son was here born to her, who, though he proved a source of present solace, only served to lengthen her captivity; for Recared, who had now succeeded to the crown of Spain, and who dreaded the claims that might eventually be

set up on behalf of his infant nephew, managed, by his intrigues with the Byzantine court, to secure his continued incarceration. Ingundis, justly punished for her unprincipled ambition, wore away many miserable years as a captive only supporting existence in the hope of seeing her boy ultimately crowned at Toledo; and when she was at length extricated, and about to resume her schemes of revenge for herself, and advancement for her son, he was suddenly seized and carried off by the plague, then raging at Constantinople.

Esther, after separating from the princess, embarked at Seville, and arrived in safety at Joppa, where she rejoined her father, who, in the possession of the sacred stone which he had transported thither with him, and in sight of the ruins of the Maccabee tomb, passed the remainder of his days in tranquillity, blessed in the society of the most affectionate of daughters, and awaiting with a calm confidence the accomplishment of the prediction that she was to confer some signal benefit upon the oppressed and scattered children of Israel. With an assured but quiet enthusiasm did Esther equally expect the same consummation, happy in promoting the happiness of her beloved father, and in receiving the homage and respect of all the Hebrews, who reverenced her

as the chosen instrument of their future deliverance. Several of the most distinguished youths of her tribe solicited her hand in marriage, but she rejected them all, declaring that, as the commissioned delegate of the Lord, she held herself to be the bride of Heaven, to whom it was not permitted to contract an earthly alliance. That the prophecy was never fulfilled, it is hardly necessary to state. Her sanguine hope proved to be a fond illusion, but she retained it to the last, and it occasioned her life to flow away in a dream of beatitude which no reality could ever have conferred.

Tortuous and unworthy as were the means by which Recared had won the crown, he showed himself, when king, not deficient in the qualities that should enable him to wear it bravely and becomingly. He quickly concluded a peace with the king of Austrasia, and after twice defeating the troops of Gontran, king of Burgundy, compelled him to sign a treaty which gave an accession of territory to the Visigoths. Convinced that the surest method of preserving his kingdom from civil and foreign war was to conciliate the mass of his subjects, as well as his Frankish neighbours, by adopting their faith, he convened an assembly of the Arian clergy and nobles, and affirming, with a pious falsehood, that his dying father had abjured

the errors of Arianism, and recommended to his son the conversion of the Gothic nation, he declared himself a Catholic, and exhorted his hearers to imitate the example of their monarch. The better to accomplish this object, he 'discreetly proposed to his illiterate audience two substantial and visible arguments, the testimony of earth and of heaven. The earth had submitted to the Nicene Synod: the Romans, the Barbarians, and the inhabitants of Spain, unanimously professed the same orthodox creed; the Visigoths resisted, almost alone, the consent of the Christian world. A superstitious age was prepared to reverence as the testimony of *heaven*, the preternatural cures which were performed by the skill or virtue of the Catholic clergy.'* Recared's proposition was received with all outward marks of approbation, and this important change of the national religion was solemnly confirmed in a council which was held shortly afterwards at Toledo.†

The workers of iniquity are generally too wise

* Gibbon's Decline and Fall. Cap. xxxvii.

† The origin of the title of Catholic Majesty, assumed by the kings of Spain, is by the Spanish writers frequently referred to King Recared, who, about the year DXC, in the third council of Toledo, was styled so by acclamation of the bishops, in regard of his religious care and consent in rooting out the Arian heresy. Among the acclamations we

to put faith in their accomplices when their service is no longer required. Quintana, the archbishop, would have willingly apostatized back to his original faith, but his royal master knew him too well to retain him in his high office. Deposed and dismissed by a Synodical decree, the enraged prelate, in conjunction with the fanatical Goisvintha, who still clung to her creed, formed a secret conspiracy against the king's life, while they fermented a revolt among the provincial Arians. But the vigilant Recared detected the conspirators, disarmed the rebels, and executed severe justice. Eight of the recusant bishops at length abjured their errors; and all the books of Arian theology, together with the house in which they had been purposely collected, were reduced to ashes. Inconsolable at this sacrilege, Goisvintha died of remorse and despair, and Quintana fled to Africa; where he dragged out the remainder of his miserable existence in obscure poverty, equally despised by all parties.

read—*Cui à Deo æternum meritum, nisi verò* CATHOLICO *Recaredo regi? Cui à Deo æterna corona, nisi verò Orthodoxo Ricaredo Regi?* But in the inscription or style of the council he is only called, *Gloriosissimus Piissimus, et Fidelissimus Dominus:* neither did the Pope Gregory the Great, in his letters that are extant to him, call him *Catholicus.*—Selden's Titles of Honour. Cap. v. p. 52.

And now might Recared, as he was unquestionably one of the most fortunate and powerful of kings, have been deemed not less happy and enviable. Let no man be judged by external circumstances and appearance! Perhaps in all Spain there lived not a more wretched being than its puissant monarch.

The possibility of the escape of Ingundis, and of her infant son living to become a claimant for the throne, filled him in the earlier part of his reign with perpetual alarms; and when the death of the child relieved him from these terrors, his days were embittered, and his nights made terrible, by the visitations of remorse, as he recalled the crimes he had committed, the iniquitous means by which he had assisted in compassing the death of his brother, and the cruel intrigues that had prolonged the imprisonment of his widow. Providence, making his evil passions the ministers of its wrath, had cursed him by the gratification of all his guilty and ambitious wishes; and as there is no truth more unquestionable than that virtue is its own reward, so did the unhappy Recared offer an equally signal and incontestable proof that vice, even when successful, invariably entails its own punishment.

COUNT LUDWIG.

A MARVELLOUS TALE.

"Il etait jadis un homme————"

Conte de Fée.

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COUNT LUDWIG,

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COUNT LUDWIG.

CHAPTER I.

Count Ludwig was a tall, stalwart, broad-shouldered, handsome, Herculean slayer of boars, stags, wolves, bears, and other inhabitants of woods and forests; famed for his exploits in the chase, for his table, his cellars, and the intense denseness of his brain; celebrated in tilt and tournament for his dexterity and strength of arm; well known both far and near for the beauty of his steeds, his love of war and hunting, and his aversion for priests, masses, and good works.

Had he lived in modern times, and in this good land, his name and occupation would have been those of a sturdy fox-hunting country squire. He wanted none of the necessary ingredients, but he lived in guttural Germany, in the dark old days of

black ignorance and bad roads, and these ingredients developed themselves in the deeds of an aristocratic dealer of death to man and beast.

Our first interview with the count must be in the lists. Behold him then with vizor closed, helmet surmounted with a drooping plume of snowy white and blood-red, armour of plain and polished steel, surcoat of scarlet velvet, long spurs of gold, emblazoned shield, large cross-hilted sword, and scarf of white. Behold him firmly seated on his huge gray steed, gay with steel plates, and flowing velvet of darkest green with gold embroidery; behold him, his feet firmly planted in his large and clumsy stirrups, his couched lance firmly grasped, awaiting but the trumpet's clanging note, to rush on his antagonist. And now survey that antagonist; a man as ponderous as the count, as wide in shoulders, as deep in chest, as strongly knit as himself, as firmly seated on his dark-brown horse. He bore his weighty suit of brass as lightly as the count his flashing steel. His surcoat, and the trappings of his steed, were crimson satin worked with his party-coloured arms; his plume was white and waving, and he held his lance as though he understood the art.

They seemed an equal match in size, in weight, in courage. Interest and expectation were on every face—no race-course multitude could gaze with more eagerness on the "running horses,"

than did the tournament multitude on these two knights, or wait more impatiently for the sounding bell, than they did for the flourish of trumpets.

The sun shone bright and clear on the tilt-yard and the bright arms and gay colours around, The ground spread out broad and level in front of a castle of goodly dimensions, and many turrets and towers. Around, hill rose above hill, dressed in dark fir, and brilliant-hued forest-trees, whilst the deep blue sky formed the calm but cheerful background of the whole picture.

Count Ludwig's opponent kept his vizored face immovably turned towards him, sitting as steadily as a statue, or that next approach to one, a life-guardsman on duty at the Horse-guards, the flutter of his plume in the light breeze, alone telling of life and movement. The count, on the contrary, ever and anon turned his head to his left-hand-side, in the direction of an elevated pavilion, the shade of which formed a dark background to the beauty it contained. Therein sat Bertha, Baroness Von Kranzfelt; a young, a beauteous, a widowed baroness, the owner of the huge grim fortress towering in sturdy strength above her, the giver of the tournament, and the sovereign of poor Count Ludwig's sighing heart. It was her fair face his heavy blue eyes sought through the

grating of his helmet, it was on her graceful movements they dwelt with tender admiration; it was from her bright eyes he in vain sought for one glance in return for his persevering gaze. He sought and sought, alas! in vain; her smiling looks were not for him.

On either side of her were high and mighty dames, who shared some of those beaming looks, who shared some, but few. Some other few were cast upon the lists, on Ludwig's armed foe, but not on himself. Behind her stood a tall, a slender, perfumed knight. No harsh steel encased him, no shading vizor hid his face. His tightly-fitting dress clung to him with a tenacity of which his tailor might well be proud, his light cap and plume just rested on his head, his gallant and airy bearing agreed with his gallant and airy costume. He leant devotedly and assiduously over the Baroness Bertha. It was he who received her words, and all the looks Count Ludwig so vainly, so hopelessly expected.

The trumpets sounded—there was no more time for hopeless gazing—the flourish was loud, long, clear, and exciting. It ceased in one prolonged note—the knights touched their chargers with their spurs, gave them their heads, and rushed forward—their feathers and scarfs streamed on the wind, the steeds' hoofs struck the earth

with a hurried, hollow sound. They met half way —the lances touched the hard armour, flew in shivers, the two knights wheeled round and cantered back to their stations amidst the loud cheers of the multitude. The assistants furnished them with fresh lances, the horses breathed awhile; Count Ludwig's eyes again rested on the baroness whilst she was gazing, her beautiful white throat stretched forth in part covered with her light veil, on Count Ludwig's immovable adversary. She turned and listened smilingly to her attendant knight's remarks, but not one little look was cast towards her *soupirant*, oppressed with love, angry feeling, and the weight of his massy armour.

A deep sigh issued from his heaving heart, and found its way, to smite the outer air through the bars of his casque; a sigh worthy of "the monster Polypheme," deep, long, heavy, and strong as his love.

The spectators talked busily together, looked first at one knight, then at the other; the esquires and attendants of each were confident in the powers of their respective lords, and each end of the lists rung with their decided and contrary prophecies of success.

The trumpets were again raised to the mouths of the trumpeters, their cheeks were again puffed

out, and reddened as they sent forth a quick and brilliant *fanfarre.* The steeds again darted forward, every eye was fixed on the combatants, as they galloped full speed against each other. Bending towards their horse's manes they met— Not a sound was heard among the crowd. The suspense lasted but an instant, the next saw Count Ludwig extended full length in the lists.

The victor again wheeled round, and raising his vizor, curvetting round the arena received the applauses which were poured forth as he passed, and so regained his place, there to await a fresh object for his prowess.

Count Ludwig lay motionless, his lance some paces from him, whilst his gray, galloped round the lists, neighing and throwing his foam over his head, until a couple of grooms put a stop to his gambols and led him ambling and arching his neck from the ground.

The esquires ran in all haste towards their prostrate master. They raised him in their arms, unrivetted his helmet, and allowed the air to blow on his heated face. His veins were swollen, his eyes partly shut, and his mouth wide open. The heat subsided, and turned to ghastly pallor. He breathed, however, in spite of the anticipations of the lower order of the spectators, who, in their unfeigned love of horrid catastrophies, pronounced

him dead. There was no wound. Count Ludwig was stunned by the weight of his fall, and his esquires slowly carried him senseless from the field, to make room for other combatants.

He was forgotten as the crowd closed upon him. The boys patted his horse as it followed, and then returned to the sports.

The baroness smiled, and talked, and looked as gaily and sweetly as ever, whilst the poor stunned count was carried to his room, unarmed, and after some time and trouble, restored in a measure to himself.

He opened his large eyes and stared around, sat up on his bed, swore a long and guttural oath, rubbed his head, stood on the floor and announced his determination of descending to the tilt yard, to see the end of the day.

But the end of the day had arrived. Victors and vanquished had returned to the castle, knights were unarming and decking themselves in their holiday suits, ladies were adorning the charms which were to do execution yet greater than before, weary horses were being rubbed down in the large stable yard, pages and esquires talked over the fortunes of the day, and the peasantry were separating various ways, singing merry choruses, talking, laughing, and gallanting *à leur façon.*

The labours of the cooks were making themselves

known by dainty odours, and hungry warriors sniffed the savoury perfume.

Count Ludwig, with dizzy head, angry heart, and an aching shoulder, proceeded to embellish his Herculean frame with silk, velvet, and gold, and belting on a gorgeous sword, made the best of his way to the great hall, where, saying little and eating much, he fixed his eyes on his baroness, and endeavoured to forget his sorrows and his fall, in large draughts of the rich wine her lord and master had inherited from his ancestors, and left to her.

CHAPTER II.

Count Ludwig's pertinacious gazes made no more effect on the Baroness von Kranzfelt than they had done in the morning. As before, the tall *svelte* man monopolized her, and the count fumed, despaired, and drank till the juicy tide he poured down his throat raised, by small degrees, a fallacious, phantom hope in his breast. Although the tightly-clad cavalier talked and listened even more devotedly to the beauteous Bertha at the close of the feast than at the beginning, the inward growling, oaths, and epithets, with which the count had at first complimented him, and the sinister looks he had bestowed upon him, were now changed to the supercilious, scornful looks, and secretly vaunting thoughts of one sure of success, and half-tipsily triumphing over a sup-

planted rival—a rival who had been feared first and then displaced. But the rival was not yet displaced, save in the wine-bedewed mind of the count. The count, however, looked upon him as being in that disagreeable predicament, and gave way accordingly to a riotous, roistering mirth, his white teeth making themselves visible beneath his chestnut mustache, as he opened his ample red mouth, and leaning back in his chair, pealed forth his mirth at every thing and nothing.

His laugh mingled with others like unto his own, which prevented it from being too prominently audible, the chorus of laughers forming a roaring, undulating sound, under cover of which the *sotto voce* conversation of the baroness and her attendant was carried on.

The baroness was young and gay—young for a widow, gay for any lady. Her age was somewhere about seven and twenty, her widowhood of some three years' standing. Her lord had been carried off by an ardent fever, which took possession of him after a drinking bout, extending from three o'clock one fine hot afternoon till six o'clock the next morning, when the baron was disinterred from beneath several weighty bodies, which lay snoring upon him, and conveyed to the bed he never again left with life.

His childless widow inherited his estates, his

Baronesse von Kranzfelt

ancient castle, and all his wealth. Her mourning passed, the fair and joyous Bertha prepared to enjoy the good things fortune had provided her with. An honest old steward of her husband's acted as her's, and kept order in her house and lands, leaving her at liberty to rule over sports and pastimes. This she did full well. Tournaments, feasts, revels of all sorts, enlivened the castle. The baroness was known far and wide for her beauty, her hospitality, and magnificence. It is natural to suppose that suitors and adorers would rally around her; she was too attractive long to remain uncourted. Lovers of all kinds wooed, some for herself alone, others mingling with their adoration a reasonable admiration of her worldly goods, whilst more sought her for them alone.

The young widow took an innocent and pleasing delight in the incense offered to her from all parts, and the lances broken *pour ses beaux yeux*. She applauded the feats of arms of her knights, worked scarfs for one and all, wherein her taste and elegance shone forth in gold, in silver, in many coloured silks, in satin, in velvet, in gorgeous fringes. She had treated them with soft words and pleased smiles to their heart's content, save only poor Count Ludwig, and his share of these sweet comforts was but small. And yet the

baroness' soul was untouched, unwounded, unfettered and free, able to sport with the pangs of others, to smile at their torments, to laugh and coquet, never dreaming of again submitting to the oft times longed for yoke of sober matrimony.

Count Ludwig, the least pampered was the most ardent of her adorers, though his ardour was not, owing, perhaps, to the Saxon phlegm which he partook of, in common with others his contemporaries, so visible as that of men less deeply wounded. His love was firmly and obstinately fixed in his heart, and as he himself said: "twenty thousand devils and as many imps" should never turn him from his pursuit; the Baroness von Kranzfelt should be his, if he sold himself body and soul to obtain the beautiful lady.

The Baroness said otherwise, and Count Ludwig, and his *gages d'amour*, in the shape of bristly slaughtered boars, conveyed to her feet by his sturdy huntsmen, huge hams of bears, portly hogsheads of wine from his own vintage, which rolled into her cellars at his entreaties, were objects of her light-hearted mirth and merriment.

This was the state of affairs till some two months before the day, which saw Count Ludwig in a most unwonted position for him, that is, extended on his back, at the most splendid tournament yet given by the lovely dame who presided over it.

Two months before this, the death warrant of her liberty was signed, and the most gorgeous summer evening that ever shone, glorious in gold and blood-red clouds, saw the deed done.

On that fated evening, the baroness had been forth to stroll among her wide-spreading meadows, beneath the tall and gently waving trees, whose long shadows stretched over the soft turf; when, on gaining the winding stony road, which gave access to the eminence crowned by her castle, she perceived a few paces on, a dusty traveller, seated on a low rock by the way side.

As she drew near, surrounded by her women, and the *écuyer* and page who followed her in her rambles, the stranger arose, and uncovering his head, bowed with a courtier's elegant grace, and then advanced towards her, cap in hand. His gait was limping, and he leant on a stick.

"Beautiful lady," he exclaimed in a strong foreign accent, speaking slowly as if seeking for words, "take pity on an unfortunate foreigner. I am travelling on foot through your magnificent country. Some malignant star caused me to wander from my way. In endeavouring to retrace my road, I climbed a steep rock which opposed itself between me and my right path. I missed my footing, fell, and I fear sprained my ankle. I have walked so far in dreadful torment. May I

hope that the goodness which shines in your eyes, may be extended to me." After saying these words, he cast down the soft black eyes he had till then fixed upon her, and bowing his head on his breast, the dark ringlets of his hair shaded his pale face, as he stood with a most deferential air, awaiting the baroness' answer. He was tall, well-formed, upright, and graceful; his features fine, his expression satisfied and supercilious, in spite of the humility he threw into his attitude and manner. His dress was somewhat tawdry and *soigné*, under the dust that covered him from head to foot. He was altogether a man to attract the favourable notice of a lady, and she before whom he stood, after surveying him an instant, with a pleased smile, made answer to his petition:—

"I could not be so inhospitable, as to turn you from my door in your trouble. You are welcome to restore yourself in my castle. Lean on my esquire, and follow me."

The stranger again bowing, raised his eyes and smiling, replied:—

"Allow me to walk by your side, noble lady, and pour forth the thanks of my grateful heart. I need no aid beyond that of my stick. The soft accents of your voice will give me strength."

The baroness slightly blushed, and looking the permission he sought, they proceeded slowly, and

side by side towards her home, followed by her *suite.*

"You said you are a foreigner. To what nation do you belong?" she asked.

"I am the Sieur de Beaugency, and I have the honour to be a Frenchman," he replied, drawing up his already upright figure, and stretching forth his arm, while his self-satisfied air became more so than ever. "Yes, beautiful *châtélaine,* I belong to that great nation. My arm and my heart are French, my arm for war," he said, shaking his hand over his head, as though he brandished a shining blade, much to the amazement of the baroness' followers: "my heart for love, the most tender, submissive love," he added, pressing his hand to his breast, and casting his handsome eyes on the noble lady with a devoted *langoureux* expression.

The Baroness von Kranzfelt had never before met one of *la grande nation.* The Sieur de Beaugency was to her a new creature, and before he had limped and gesticulated many minutes by her side, she began to think him a most interesting, fascinating creature, dusty and tired as he was.

His ankle was examined by an old uncle of the baroness, who had taken up his abode with her since her widowhood, a man of science and pacific pursuits, who wore a long gown, and lived like an

old owl in a high turret, remote from the lively part of the castle, where he followed his philosophy and eccentricities at his ease.

This learned old gentleman bandaged de Beaugency's leg as expertly as he could; while the pitying Bertha stood by and coquetted with him, as by word and look he did her homage. His task done, the white-bearded sage strode back to his turret, the Frenchman and his hostess sitting down to a supper, to which, and the supremely good wine, he did full justice, praising every thing most courteously, offering the baroness the most delicate morsels from his own plate, talking and eating at the same time, drinking, showering compliments without end on himself, his nation, and the beautiful German who had received him.

Before the supper was over, and de Beaugency had drank the health of the baroness and his king, he, with his French ease and *abandon*, was perfectly at home, and had made her equally so in her own house. They talked as old acquaintances, and he delicately insinuated in his childish, broken German, that from "that fortunate moment, the enchanting baroness should be for ever the *dame de ses pensées*." Then he volunteered a recital of his life and adventures, to which she, Dido like, gave her whole and undivided attention, retaining near her a poor gentlewoman who served as her

The Dame de Compagnie.

companion, and who being fat, tired, and sleepy, nodded in her long-backed chair, unconscious of the animated descriptions of the Frenchman, long before he had told one quarter of his story.

It was not so with the baroness. Whether Cupid repeated the experiment which succeeded so well in the case of Dido and "pious Enæas," I know not, but like that lovely queen of old, she listened with delight and pity to the truths and falsehoods the handsome traveller entertained her with, and dwelt with dangerous complacency on every look and gesture, till the first spark of love, which had been to her unconsciously struck at their first meeting, was quickly kindling into a flame, long ere the vivacious, and respectfully impertinent de Beaugency brought his narrative to an end.

He told her that he was the younger son of a noble house; that his brother, from infancy, had entertained for him a most unjust and deadly hatred; that he had poisoned his father's soul and embittered it against him; that his cruel parent had destined him to lead a useless monkish life.

"My soul could not submit to such slavery. No, I was born for arms. My mother died in my infancy; I had no sisters, I was alone, abandoned by the universe. 'Rather perish,' I said to my-

self, 'than immure thyself in a monastery, a living tomb. Isidore de Beaugency, thou wast born for better things!' My resolution was taken. I resolved to exile myself from my country, the land of my warlike ancestors, from beautiful France, that queen of nations, that nest of heroes. Though I adore my country—though I would spill every drop of blood for France, I knew, that as long as my father lived, it was a land of peril to me. I consulted my safety and inclination in flight. Secretly, as a fugitive, when night enveloped the earth with her shades, I left the paternal roof. A few pieces of gold, and this good sword,"... he exclaimed, drawing it as he spoke, and waving it above his head, "were my only property; this sword which a de Beaugency won in battle, and which shall leave me but in death!" So saying, he returned it to its scabbard, the baroness wiped her eyes; he put himself into a gracefully reposing attitude, and continued—"Italy received me. Beneath her blue skies I sighed for France, my dear France, whilst I opened for myself a road to glory. I joined a chief of an armed body, one of those famed Condottieri. I distinguished myself—I conducted myself as a Frenchman—victory every where pursued me—I covered myself with laurels—my fame was too great for envy with her hiss-

ing snakes—she respected me—I was without a rival—I left them far behind me—In battle I was a god, I was more than mortal.

"The Condottiere, under whom I served, was slain on the field of glory. In endeavouring to save his life, my days were menaced. I was grievously wounded—my chief fell, and yet I prolonged the combat. I called our flying men—I led them on to victory. I triumphed—the fight was our own. On the bloody field of conquest those brave men chose me for their head; with shouts, with tears, they demanded that I should henceforth lead them on to certain fame. I yielded to their prayers,—I became a Condottiere.

"I passed from glory to glory. All strove who should enlist de Beaugency on their side. De Beaugency and victory were one. French valour cannot be hidden. Fame was mine, riches soon followed, though gold I despise. Ten years elapsed, and I was yet absent from my country. Tidings reached me of my father's death—my brother had perished soon after my departure. He died his sword in his hand. I was heir to all our large estates.

"Bidding farewell to my brave companions in arms, I prepared to retrace my steps, and leave the scene of my thousand triumphs. Tenderly embracing my friends, I departed, accompanied

only by one esquire, and having converted all my riches into diamonds, we travelled gaily forwards. Something whispered to my heart that bright days waited me. We reached, beautiful lady, your stately land, and here misfortune, and the height of happiness, have been mine. We were attacked by robbers. I fought like a brave man. My horse was slain under me. My esquire perished. Those barbarous savages deprived me of the fruit of my victories. They left me senseless on the earth. On returning to life, all that remained to me was a small valise, containing a few necessary valuables. That I have with me.

"But let us forget this dark scene, in the happiness of becoming acquainted with the most lovely, the most amiable, of her sex. Yes, charming baroness, centuries of torment would have been effaced by the soft moments I have spent beneath your roof.

"When I beheld you, a tender palpitation—" Here a long-drawn, full-toned snore, followed by a long contemptuous puff, escaped from the elderly and sleeping gentlewoman, which being succeeded by a short, abrupt snort, ending in a smart choke, put a stop to the Sieur de Beaugency's harangue, and proclaimed that her slumbers were at an end.

The baroness sighed. The gentlewoman being but half awake, so far forgot her situation as to

propose bed. Her lady could have remained for ever, but she summoned her pages to conduct her guest to his apartment. He kissed her hand with tender respect, and, leaning on a page, backed out of the room, casting a dying look on his auditress as he left the chamber.

She, like the Carthaginian queen, remained awhile to gaze on his vacant place, to sigh alone, to retrace his words and gestures, and then, without pondering on the sentiments that were growing in her heart, retired also to dream of the handsome Frenchman, who was peaceably reposing on a bed of down, dreaming of—nothing.

CHAPTER III.

As de Beaugency's lameness, under the care of Baroness von Krantzfelt's mysterious uncle, vanished, so her *penchant* for him increased. A Frenchman is never blind to the impression he makes, and the ex-Condottiere took especial care, by every means in his power, to nourish her weakness for him. His voice was shown off in tender songs, accompanied on her lute; his words, his looks, were all studied to ensnare her. The little valise, which he maintained, was all that the robbers, he affirmed to have met, had left him, contained but a scanty supply of property. Materials for shaving, a pair of red and white striped "*tights*," such as were then worn, a smart dagger, and a velvet mantle, rather the worse for wear—these were the only objects the strictest inspection could then have discovered.

In spite of this, le Sieur de Beaugency shone forth in splendid attire. The baroness' castle had its tailor, and he, under the Frenchman's able direction, clothed him from head to foot in divers satins and velvets, silks and brocades, furnished by his hostess. In truth, he set them off to the greatest advantage. He was a handsome man, and carried himself like a king. So the baroness thought.

Under her tuition, de Beaugency improved in German, and she soon learned from him to say many pretty things in French, learnt his songs, and taught him her's in return, and with these they mutually regarded eachot her. He sat by her, smiled, sighed, admired her work, stared at her till he caught her eyes, and then abased his own in devoted humility. She fixed her's on him as he sung, and when, in her turn, discovered, turned away with a beautiful blush, which covering her fair clear skin, spread itself to the white forehead, over which the blue veins formed a delicate network.

Then, as he improved in walking, they strolled abroad together, at first attended by her suite, and at last alone, and then their walks lengthened, till the quiet moon lighted them home, and the baroness said little as she leant on his arm, whilst he talked, or remained silent, as he deemed it likely

the effect he wished to be produced, would be heightened by the one or the other.

The baroness loved and knew it, and so did he; that is, she loved, and he knew it, for his heart was too light to be much moved; but he delighted in the sensation he made, the homage paid to him, the *affaire de cœur* he was engaged in, and he thought the baroness, her estates, her castle, and her gold, most agreeable acquisitions to any man, and not at all beneath the notice of a de Beaugency.

Now, matters standing thus at the time of the tournament, it is not very probable that poor Count Ludwig had much chance of succeeding in his suit, but Count Ludwig thought otherwise, thanks to the deluding Rhenish wherewith he had deluged his, never over-penetrating, wits.

"She like him!" he said to himself, as he leant his elbows on the table and stared at them, stroking his mustache the while; "she cannot—no, no, a man who cannot take part in tilting, because he has happened to turn his foot on one side, is not a man for any woman. He looks very fine, and so do the pages, and she talks to him very smilingly, but I've heard it said that when women are in love, they can neither speak to or look at the man they love. She never does either to me. Thunder and devils! she does love me. Dear little Bertha,

you shall be mine. To-night I'll speak like a man, and soon turn that Frenchman out. I'm not afraid. Oh! no,—at least I think not;" and then the count caused another river of rich wine to run down his capacious throat.

The feast over, the *convives* next disported themselves with dancing. Count Ludwig never danced. He stood apart, like the colossus of Rhodes, spanning the floor with his feet, his arms akimbo, and his eyes, where they ever were, full on the baroness.

De Beaugency did not dance. He did the interesting, Bertha remained with him, and they indulged in all the *minauderies* and excusable follies of lovers.

The count, after a time, walked straight up to them, and seated himself by her side. The Frenchman frowned and cleared his throat, the German took no notice of him.

"Baroness von Kranzfelt," he said, stretching forth his stout and well-made legs, "I love you—I do, by my honour!"

The baroness turned towards him her clear blue eyes, full of laughter, and replied, "Do you?"

"I do. Have not the wild boars, the hams, and all my tender gifts told my love? Yes, baroness, I love you. I have sworn you shall be mine. Will you?"

"No, certainly not," replied the fair Bertha, "I do not love you, Count Ludwig, and all the ugly great boars you sent me have had no effect."

"Not love me!" cried poor Ludwig, opening his eyes; "not love me! Never mind that, I love you, and when you are my wife you will love me too."

The baroness indulged in a most merry burst of laughter; such things being allowable in those days. The count was bewildered, and his anger began to arise. De Beaugency inquired into the cause of her amusement.

"Why, the count pretends to say that he loves me, and actually wishes to persuade me to love him; and," added she, laughing yet more, "to marry him!"

De Beaugency laughed too, and his laugh was sneering and conceited.

"Oh! poor count!" he said, and then redoubled his merriment.

The count could not bear this.

"What do you mean by *poor count?*" he said, rising, and standing before him.

"Why, poor count!" was the reply, accompanied by the insulting laugh.

"Learn to insult a German noble," cried Ludwig, at the same instant striking him across the face with the back of his hand; "and now

if you are a man, we will finish this with our swords."

De Beaugency turned very pale, and drew back a step or two, then recovering himself he advanced his breast, struck it rapidly several times, contracted his brows, and, scornfully protruding his under lip, said, "A de Beaugency is not accustomed to measure his spotless sword with that of a man who has been overthrown in the lists. Count, I cannot fight you;" and then he withdrew behind the baroness' chair.

"Coward! Beggar!" roared the count, "you are afraid."

The same opinion was maintained by those who had assembled to hear what was passing.

"Respect the noble baroness," replied de Beaugency, without emerging from his retreat, while she felt her chair quiver beneath his grasp; "respect these ladies. Calm yourself, and withdraw."

"On your knees then, and beg my pardon."

"Count Ludwig, you have insulted one of my guests!" cried the baroness, seizing his sturdy arm with her small hand, and stopping him as he advanced to drag the offender from his fortress, "and therefore you have insulted me. If any one deserves chastisement, it is yourself. Retire instantly," she continued, trembling, and the crimson blood colouring her cheeks. "Leave this castle,

and never, never more appear before me. Go, or force shall compel you to do so."

The count stood amazed, and in the mean while de Beaugency made his escape, and left the hall, taking his station in the darkness behind the musicians in the gallery, to watch the termination of the affair.

There in safety he stretched forth his head, peering with a timid air, nowise according in dignity with his handsome person, or what was enacting in the hall beneath; nor did he leave his station of security, and regain his post beside the baroness, until he had seen the irate and formidable Count Ludwig stride furiously and heavily through the low-arched door, followed by his bloodhound Wolf, his inseparable companion in field, in hall, in peace and war.

The count stamped down the spiral stairs, and the dancing continued, and de Beaugency and his baroness were again together, whilst he reached the courtyard, and shouted, and roared, and swore for his people. The moon shone quietly on him, the stars seemed to wink at him in derision, whilst the echoes repeated the loud, angry, rough voice that called so vainly.

He tramped over the uneven pavement and went into the stables, the horses were snuffing and munching, but not a soul was there.

Now the count not knowing the localities of the castle, and being moreover somewhat confused by the united effects of Rhenish and anger, knew not where to turn. Leaving the stables, he applied his silver hunting-horn to his mouth, and rang out the well-known call to his followers. Four or five times he gave it forth. The last loud blast brought some of his men, tumbling in all haste, from a doorway behind him.

They spoke thick, and one or two of them seemed peculiarly feeble about the knees, with an inclination, pretty dexterously combated, to wheel round on their heels. Count Ludwig ordered them to bring out their horses, and sent the most intellectual of the number to call out the rest of his company.

Oh! woful disappointment, to be called thus suddenly, thus prematurely from good cheer and joyous company. Unfortunate men-at-arms! The count commanded, the count must be obeyed. Forth came the horses, slipping and clattering on the stones. With much noise, and after many unusual blunders in arranging their trappings, they were ready for their march. Count Ludwig's armour was packed on his war-horse, he mounted a favourite bay, the drawbridge was lowered, and the cavalcade, laughing and joking, passed over it. The count pulled up, and with an oath commanded

a silence, which, in an instant, followed his mandate. They descended the stony road, and then dashed off at a good round pace over the country.

On they rode, not a whisper was heard; nothing but the many quick-moving hoofs and clanging of arms. They were passing over a plain, whereon stood here and there a few clumps of fir-trees; now and then they passed a forest tree, and sometimes a few old hollow trees, standing one or two together, hid in ivy.

The count had been mentally soliloquizing all the way. "Oh! poor count, indeed! Beggarly Frenchman, do you think *yourself* worthy of her? It would be a fine thing for you to be lord of my beautiful Bertha! No, if I die for it, she shall be mine!"

Thus spoke the count's spirit, as he reached the old ivy-hidden trees.

"She shall," said a voice.

The count's horse dashed furiously forward at full gallop, and all the rest tore after him. Could it be possible? Had he heard those words? They seemed to him to have come clear and cold from the old trees. The voice was strange and disagreeable. Could a shriek-owl have spoken, it would have spoken in that tone.

As his horse started off, the count fancied he saw two large eyes shining in the moon-

light among the leaves; large, full, gleaming eyes.

He tried in vain to rein up his steed. On it flew, snorting over hill and dale, nor suffered itself to be checked till it reached his castle door. There the riders stopped, the panting horses foaming, and trembling with their exertion.

The men deemed their lord exceedingly submissive to the wine he had taken, and he, only speaking to order supper in his own room, withdrew there, leaving them to refresh themselves below.

The count eat as though he were breaking a long fast, and drank draughts in the same ratio, and pondered on what had passed, and thought of the trees, the voice, and the eyes.

"Good news, at all events," he said, as he stretched himself, rose from the table, and threw himself into a large velvet chair, crossed his legs, and closed his eyes. It was past twelve, but he felt too idle to undress, and sat blinking his eyes, and nodding, between sleeping and waking, in his velvet nest.

"I wonder if the voice belonging to those ugly eyes means to help me," he thought, and then his chin, with a sudden plunge, smote his breast, his eyes closed, and his mouth opened.

"Curse those rats!" was his next thought, as

his eyes half unclosed, and he heard a patting kind of run on the oak floor. It stopped, and then trotted on again, stopped, and on again, and then stopped short in front of the count. He sat up, leant his elbows on the elbows of his chair, and looked to the spot.

No rat was there; but, seated on the floor before him, quickly scratching its side and blinking its malicious, sparkling eyes, he beheld a little black ape.

"The devil!" cried the count, with the voice and opened eyelids of astonishment.

"Oh, no, only a little imp," said the ape, in the tones of a hoarse, narrow-chested dwarf, at the same time running towards him, and familiarly jumping on his knee.

With its little bony, clammy hand, it took possession of the count's large, sinewy fist, and, looking up into his face, grinning, showing its sharp white teeth, and still blinking its quick eyes, it said—"And so you are in love?"

"How the devil did you know that?"

"Oh! he knows every thing, and I know most things,—that among the rest. You are very determined she shall be yours. Confide in me, and she shall."

"She shall!" was echoed by a voice at the open window, the same he had heard among the trees.

"Who is that?" said the count.

"Believe it, but never mind who it is," said the little ape, pulling at his hand. "Do you wish to obtain Baroness Bertha?"

"With all my soul!"

"Very well. Do you know how?"

"Yes; besiege her castle, to be sure, and have her out, and cut that vile Frenchman's throat, or something of that kind."

"I can tell you a better way than that, and much shorter," replied the monkey, in a confidential-whisper. "You know her old uncle, that old man who lives up in the turret?"

"Yes; what of him?"

"Why, he's a magician, only don't quote me. Now, you must catch him alive, carry him off, and make him call up the demon of the forest here," said the ape, pulling the hair on his projecting forehead, in the fashion of a groom, with a deferential pull, as he made mention of the demon.

"Oh!" answered the count, "but that seems a very long way of going to work. To catch him, I must attack the castle, and pull him out of his hole. I might as well carry off Bertha at once."

"Don't interrupt me," said his little hairy counsellor. "I know better than you. You must catch him to-morrow night. The moon will be full. He goes out at the full moon and the fol-

lowing night, when he is in want of certain herbs, to gather them on the high pointed hill, half a mile from the castle. Do you know it?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, he will be there to-morrow at the moon-rising. The herbs he looks for grow under some broken ground and rocks near the top. Seize him there, carry him off at once to the forest where you kill your boars, and bears, and vermin. Take him to that open part where the mad woman murdered her baby. I will get every thing ready. What do you say to that? Is that a good plan? Make him call up the demon, and *he* will give you your wish."

"I've heard of him before. I will do as you advise."

"That's right," replied the ape, holding the count's hand in one of his, and stroking it with the other. "I like you, you've no nonsense or fear about you."

"Fear! I should think not indeed," said Count Ludwig.

"Come away! come away! we're going!" called out a number of voices, ringing through the air, shrill and supernatural.

The little ape looked up. "I am coming," he called out, and then putting the count's hand to his mouth, he made his sharp little teeth meet on

the back of it. They pierced it with the sensation of redhot needles. The suddenness of the bite made the stout count wince. The ape chattered, jumped from his lap to the table, knocked over the light, flew out of the window, leaving Count Ludwig to listen to a shrieking discordant chorus, wild and witch-like, that died away in the distant air, whilst he, knocking his shins against every thing, groped his way about his room in utter darkness.

CHAPTER IV.

The following day Count Ludwig's hand presented four little black marks, swollen and blue all around, proving to him the reality of an adventure he felt somewhat inclined to doubt.

The wish to obtain the Baroness von Kranzfelt raged stronger than ever in his breast, his anger towards de Beaugency was yet fiercer than the night before, his impatience to elope with the wizard knew no bounds—in short, every feeling seemed exaggerated and sharpened, pushing him irresistibly forward, in a manner wonderful to himself, to take any steps, be they what they might, to attain unto his desires. The circulating venom of the imp's saliva, flowing through his veins, had done its work.

Wearily and restlessly he passed the long summer's day. All his amusements turned to tedious

annoyances. Sitting in the chamber-like recess of his large window, he thought of the baroness, whistled a tune, unsheathed and sheathed his sword, patted Wolf's fine head, and seeing the sun grow redder, and the shadows lengthen, he went down into the court of his castle, and there found his esquire and grooms holding in readiness the gray charger which had borne him to his reverse the day before.

He mounted, and gathered up the ornamented reins. The men stood cap in hand. He spurred his horse, and, nodding to them as he passed, left the castle of his ancestors for ever.

Wolf followed him, gaily running by his side after they left the gates, jumping and barking for joy, as the handsome horse bounded along, foaming and curvetting as he went. It was a fine sight to see the tall strong count sitting on him, upright and firm, and immovable as a centaur, while his long white feathers streamed in the evening breeze, lightly contrasting with the iron strength of the man. It was a ten miles ride the count had to accomplish before he reached the foot of the mountain. As he trotted and galloped on, the sun went down blood red, the stars shone forth one after the other, as the golden remains of the sun's glory faded away, and the uniform dark purple of night tinged the sky. The light summer wind blew softly and refreshingly,

the nightingales made themselves heard, and the glowworms sparkled through the dark.

Count Ludwig spurred his steed, and Wolf ran on steadily, his tongue hanging out. They reached the mountain. The count dismounted, and passing the bridle over his arm, began the ascent. The moon had not arisen. He toiled up the steep narrow way; his horse snorted, and struck sparks from the rough stones. A little more than half-way up the height, the road terminated, and some distance above that he saw the rocks and broken ground. He looked round him.

"The devil! What shall I do with the horse?" thought the count.

"Give me the reins," said a hoarse voice beneath him; and, looking down, he saw, through the dim, confusing starlight the little ape of the preceding night standing by his boot. "Come! You've no time to lose, don't make objections, leave the beast with me. Go on, you will find me here waiting for your return."

The count threw the reins to the imp, who caught at them with apish dexterity. Wolf growled at him and showed his teeth, whilst he insinuated his tail between his legs, and, when his master walked on, howled dismally, as though fearing to pass the ugly little animal, and unwilling to be left behind.

The count whistled and called. Wolf's fidelity

triumphed over his fears, he dashed past the imp, who grinned and hurraed at him. The dog ran quivering to his master, meanly depressing his ears and tail, and walking close by his side, they continued their ascent.

The way was craggy and tedious. The count climbed the rugged, broken ground and rocks, and, looking over them, reconnoitred the road on the other side of the hill, the road which led from the Baroness von Kranzfelt's castle. He could distinguish it white and winding, and strained his eyes in vain in search of the old wizard.

All was silent around him. There were no trees in which the soft wind could sigh, no nightingale was near to sing, no watchdog to bark, no passing travellers or horses to break through the dead, calm silence. The count heard nothing but his own breathing, the rustling of his long plume, or the rattling of his dog's collar as he shook himself, or sharply scratched his ear with his hind leg. He sat on a low rock, leaning against another which served as a parapet to conceal him, and thus he impatiently watched for the rising of the moon, ever and anon peering over his stony rampart, and then returning to his reflections. These were not very profound or complicated. A strong, resolute determination to obtain the baroness, *coûte qui coûte*, possessed him. His usual

phlegm had abandoned him. An activity, a burning impatience, he had never before known, had taken hold on him. His blood seemed to flow with bursting violence, his pulses throbbed quickly and heavily. The calm and quiet about him, instead of composing, but added to his tumult. He did not analyze his feelings, but such sensations he had never experienced before. His love, which heretofore had been as dogged as sincere, now burnt with a raging flame. The idea of losing the beauteous Bertha shook his naturally immovable frame with anger and anxiety, and he looked over his rock in search of the man who was to be instrumental in giving him the wish, to obtain which he resolved that every obstacle should be overleapt.

He looked in vain, but his eyes rested on the first thin line of light, which announced that the moon was rising. It was visible behind the rugged black mountains that stood dark and stern in the distance. As she slowly crept from behind them, their rough outlines became more visible, and the dim starlight gave place by degrees to her mild, pure lustre. She cast long dark shadows from every object, whilst she lingered on the horizon, and the count again looking towards the winding road, now more distinctly seen, perceived the tall, thin old-

wizard, stooping from age, toiling up it, leaning on a long staff.

He retreated once more behind his parapet, waiting with growing impatience till the long-expected man should have finished his painful ascent.

Wolf lay crouching at his feet, uneasy and trembling. A sound of wings disturbed the deadly quiet. The count looked up. A huge owl was slowly and heavily flying above him, and perching on a rock near him, commenced its dismal hooting. The sensitive dog raised his head, showed his teeth, and uttered a suppressed howl; but on a rebuke from his master again couched down, with quivering limbs and imploring looks.

Presently a low chanting sounded in the distance, drew nearer and nearer in the direction of Count Ludwig, paused now and then, and finally continuing, as it approached, without stop or break. The voice that chanted was tremulous and feeble. Count Ludwig for the last time looked from the rocks. Rising up he leant forward on his hands and knees, and obtained a full view of the old wizard a few paces from the foot of the rock. He was dressed in a long, velvet, furred gown, a crimson cap, with long ears, fastened beneath his chin,

set tight to his head, and showed his lividly white face and sharp features in strong relief. His beard was very long, as were his shaggy white eyebrows. His velvet shoes were fastened with a sparkling diamond, and one yet more magnificent shone in his cap. He supported himself on a long ivory staff, and as he slowly and sadly chanted forth his monotonous song, he picked his herbs and put them in a bag, which was suspended by his side.

The hooting of the owl formed a dolorous accompaniment, in keeping with the old man's voice, as he slowly strayed along in the moonlight, now growing vigorous and clear, and deeming himself unseen and alone, gathered leaves and flowers on the desert mountain.

The gigantic count broke through his solitude and his occupation. Springing from the rocks, his dog bounding after him, he stood by the wizard's side, and grasped his thin and shrunken arm in his strong hand. The old magician dropped the handful of weeds he had just plucked, and shrieked with a terrified and quavering shriek. He stared wildly at the count, and tried to disengage himself.

"You must come with me," said Ludwig. "It is no use to struggle. I am young and strong, and if you do not come freely, why I

must carry you off by force. Come then, and lose no time."

"Where are you going to take me, and what for?" replied the old man, ceasing to struggle.

"To the forest of Storberg. I am not going to harm you. When we arrive you shall know what I would have of you. Come," he added, as he led the wizard swiftly tottering round the rocks, by a narrow sheep-path that skirted them.

"The forest of Storberg," he muttered, as he was dragged ruthlessly along. "I can guess what I am to do there."

The count spoke not another word. Their footsteps, and the hooting of the owl, enfeebled by distance, were the only sounds to be heard. They reached the road by which the count had ascended. There he saw his gray pawing against the stones, and the little ape squatting on the ground in front of him, holding the reins.

"Come! we have no time to lose," cried the little wretch, turning his head sharply towards them. The wizard made an exclamation of recognition and surprise, and the monkey pulling his stumpy hair as he had done once before, they spoke together in a sonorous tongue, unintelligible to the stout German.

"Put him up before, and let us depart," said the ugly creature.

The count obeyed, lifted the magician as readily as he would have done a dried reed, seated him on the horse, took his seat in the saddle behind him, and firmly held him round the waist. The ape with one bound took its place likewise. It seated itself astride with its round, narrow back leaning against the high back of the saddle, and seizing the broad, embossed crupper with both hands, proceeded to belabour the horse with rapid kicks from its little feet.

The horse snorted and reared. Count Ludwig dug his long spurs into its sides, the imp gave it one imp-like pinch, when springing violently forward he began his furious career.

The steep, rough descent did not impede his course. The rolling stones slipped beneath his feet, and in a minute they reached the foot of the hill. Away they went over the level country. The quickness of the motion affected even the count; he bent forward, and bowed his head towards his horse's mane, whilst he tightly held the old wizard, exhausted and coughing in his arms. The little ape sang an odd, quaint song, and by his kicks and twitchings of the crupper guided the steed; his master, so famed for his equestrian skill, had no power over him.

Ever and anon a shrill "*hurra*" was heard,

dying off as soon as uttered, to which the ape responded by a loud laugh, and the horse quickened his pace each time. The count heard it but saw nothing, and on they flew. They passed his castle—he had barely time to look at it. It stood in the full moonlight, its angles making large masses of sharp light and shade, whilst its firm round towers gradually passed from one to the other. No sign of life was there visible; no sound, no light; it stood like a rock, as strong and as solitary.

They reached the forest, and dashed into its gloom. The dead branches gave way before them, they brushed through the thick, green boughs without scratch, or injury, or slackening of their pace. The birds woke up frightened from their rest, and the wild animals fled on either side.

The imp suddenly checked the horse; the shock threw the old man from the count's arms to the earth. The ape jumped down, screeching and chattering with laughter, and Ludwig dismounting raised up the dizzied enchanter. Wolf stood panting by his side, and the splendid gray who had carried him so often and so well, through fights and huntings, with one long, deep groan, fell dead at his feet.

The count left the wizard, and stood over his horse with a look of dismay.

The imp pulled him by the leg.

"I did not bring you here," he said, "to stare at a dead horse. Follow me. Time goes on, and your steed won't come to life again, so you may leave him with a safe conscience, to the brutes and the birds."

The count, without speaking, supported the old man, and followed the ape, who threaded down a narrow path, and turned head over heels as he went. Suddenly they emerged into a large open space, half shaded by the trees, and half in strong clear light.

Count Ludwig saw, sitting crouched on the roots of a large oak, a woman naked to her waist,—thin, livid,—who fixed her large, glassy black eyes full upon them, nor once gave that sign of humanity—the shrouding them for one second with her eyelids. A white bundle lay at her feet, through which blood seemed to be oozing.

The little ape, with the *empressement* of a master of the ceremonies, led his companions into the middle of the open space, and then bade them stand, nor dare to move till he returned, and then trotted off into the depths of the forest.

Count Ludwig did not like the dead stare of the figure opposite, so he turned his back upon her to avoid it. Poor Wolf's feelings seemed to

agree with those of his master, who felt his side quivering against him as the dog pressed close to him in his agony. The old wizard seated himself on the earth, and the count pulling from his neck a silver flask, his constant *compagnon de voyage*, gave it to him for his refreshment, and thus they spent the minutes of separation from their apish friend.

CHAPTER V.

After a while they heard the sound of rumbling, rattling wheels, and from the point whence he had disappeared they beheld the little imp returning, seated on a low cart, like the "*tender*" of a brewer's dray, which tore up to them, drawn by two lank dogs, with mangy, rough skins, snarling teeth, foaming lips, and rabid eyes.

The ape sprang from his seat, and pulling out a black sack which had formed it, threw it on the ground, and then kicking his dogs, sent them flying and yelping through the forest with his rattling, empty vehicle.

He then sat down before the magician, speaking to him in the sonorous language previously used, and enforcing his speech by movements of his skinny little forefinger. His listener answered by

nods and monosyllables and then they arose and opened the sack.

Count Ludwig looked on, and saw them pull forth three skulls, a small brazier, a leaden box, a censer, and a long white gown, which the old man put on, at the same time pulling off his cap, and exposing his high wrinkled forehead and white hair to the night breeze. The imp meanwhile collected some dry wood, part of which he piled on the brazier. The wizard, taking his staff, drew a large circle round himself and the count, and as he drew it a border of flame sprung from the end of his stick, and marked the circle in a small flickering light. He next inscribed a triangle within the circle, and at each angle he placed a skull; then turning to the count he asked him for his sword, which being given into his hands, he said to him,

"Count Ludwig, each time that I summon the demon of this forest adds to my years of purgatory. I tremble as I do it; but you are a man of violence, wrathful and harsh, and must be obeyed. Now listen and attend! Speak not one word unless you are first addressed; move not from this triangle whatever you may see; and cast all fear from you, or you are lost."

"Your last caution," answered the count, "I

do not need, the first I will obey. Begin. I am ready."

The magician opened the leaden box, and took from it some incense, which he placed in the censer, sprinkling it with a liquid which he poured from a little gold bottle, taken from the same receptacle. This done, the ape drew near, and spitting on the dry wood in the brazier, a thin flame darted from it with a loud explosion, and then subsiding kindled the fuel, from which the wizard, lighting his censer, began to perfume the air with the blue smoke curling from it, whilst he held his open palm aloft, and sang in the same monotonous, sad chanting, he had used on the mountain.

The imp left the circle, and searched beneath the trees; soon returning, bearing in his clenched hands a long and writhing snake. He held it by the throat, and its slimy, taper tail, lashed the little monster's thin, hairy arms. Drawing close to the brazier he put it on the burning wood, grinning as he saw the reptile's agonized struggles, and pushing it back each time it sought to escape.

The flames burnt high, and the ape fed them with aromatic gums from the leaden box. The wizard, laying aside the censer, took the sword, and pointing it towards an angle of the triangle,

in a distinct but chilling sepulchral voice, slowly spoke words unknown to Count Ludwig. As he proceeded, a female figure, which till then had remained immovable beneath the tree, moaned lowly and feebly, and then with a shriek, long and loud, as the shriek of one in despair, about to be swallowed by the stormy waves of the tossing sea, she arose and drew close to the fiery circle. Her eyes, large and dark, rolled with the wild savage roll of madness, from the blood-stained cloth she had pulled forth a naked baby, which she held by the foot, whilst its head, half parted from its body, rested bleeding on the ground.

As she stood wailing and shrieking, the imp continued to feed the fire with different ingredients, and the magician slowly and steadily to give forth the unknown words. Count Ludwig, folding his arms, stood firm and resolute, whilst poor Wolf howled and bayed without reproof, without restraint.

The trees around began to rustle more loudly, and a cold thin wind to blow, whistling among them, increasing in a few minutes, bowing their tufted tops, and howling so fiercely, that the old man's voice, raised to its highest pitch, was sometimes lost in the roar. The high flames in the brazier waved like a fiery plume, the moon was hidden

by thick, low clouds, total darkness was around, illumined only by the flickering fire, which shone on the spectre's thin convulsed features, whilst her hysterical shriekings mingled with the boisterous wind.

The magician raised one of the skulls on the point of the sword, and held it above his head. His voice grew loud, commanding, and energetic, and as he proceeded the count heard groaning and lamentation on all sides—groans such as are uttered by human nature under the most intense agony—chilling, prolonged, and direful lamentations, like those wrung from the bitterest, the most hopeless anguish.

The confusing, baffling wind blustered on, in loud and sudden gusts. Faces and forms became visible, flitting by the red firelight. Some approached the circle, and bending their heads towards its centre, gave to Count Ludwig's view all the horrors the churchyard hides within its rich earth,—from the pale set features rigid in death, but as yet untainted, to the frightful corruption that obliterates all trace of what has been, and yet from this horrid pollution eyes stared forth, goggling with stony gaze on vacancy.

The magician continued loudly to speak, the winds to rush and rock the sighing trees, the

spectres to appear, and the groaning voices to sound, whilst poor Wolf's piteous howling mixed with them.

Suddenly the magician cast the skull far from him, among the trees. The wind was still, the voices ceased, the flame was extinguished, a deathlike silence and darkness had taken the place of the confusing sounds and lurid light. The wizard spoke in a clear slow tone a few words, and a hoarse, loud voice answered angrily from the depths of the forest. The wizard spoke the same words again, and once more the rough voice replied; again he spoke, a third time, but more loudly, again the voice replied; a rolling peal of thunder roared above them, the clouds suddenly passed from the moon, and her quiet light once more shone on the still forest.

The mad woman's spectre had disappeared—all was calm and peaceful. The wizard turned towards the second angle of the triangle, and again began the low chant. Drops of heat ran down his high forehead—his look was anxious and wild. The little ape kindled the fire as he had done before, and tossed the censer to and fro. The blue smoke curled in the moonlight, and assimilated with its peaceful character.

After a while the magician paused. A chorus of feeble, unearthly voices, replied to him; blue

gleaming lights danced among the trees, and Count Ludwig felt the earth rock beneath his feet. The voices died away, and the magician resumed his song. Bright, slimy snakes wriggled from the sheltering forest towards the circle, and lay around it, hissing and rearing their flat heads, or crawling lazily over each other.

Again the wizard paused, and the chorus answered him. The sound of those strange voices, singing so coldly and faintly high in the clear air, struck unpleasantly on the count's ear, and an involuntary shiver ran over him; whilst the unceasing heaving and rocking of the earth, and the strong overpowering smell of the incense, combined to dizzy his head. He felt inclined to throw himself from the circle, by an almost irresistible impulse. His brain whirled, and he knelt on the earth to save himself from falling.

When the chorus was again silent, the wizard, spreading forth his hands, spoke in low tones, and then taking the sword, he lifted the second skull on high. A pale light streamed from its eyeless sockets. From the darkness a fleshless skeleton stood forth, and stood before the magician, stretching its worm-eaten arms towards the skull. The count looked on it, and beheld that it was headless. He saw the wizard slowly lower

the sword, and drop the skull into its arms. A loud screeching laugh burst forth all around them, ringing and lawless, accompanied with a loud clapping of hands and yelping of curs.

The snakes curling themselves round the skeleton's legs, crawled up to his trunk and drew themselves through his motionless ribs, whence some of them wound round his neck, and others slipping in their own slime, fell cold and heavy to the ground.

Like the chorus, the laugh died away. The wizard touching the skull with the sword's point, spoke a few emphatic words. The bony jaws opened, a voice issued from them dry and sepulchral. The count could not understand it. The jaws closed with a loud snap, again the air was darkened, the earth heaved like unto a heaving sea, the wizard called aloud in a commanding tone, and the rough, fierce voice from the forest answered angrily and close at hand. Again the wizard called. The count felt a gleam of heat spread round them. The thick darkness 'was only relieved by the pale burning fire that formed the circle and triangle. He could distinguish nothing, and yet he was conscious of the presence of some supernatural being. Wolf flew to the circumference of the circle furiously barking, and then retreated snarling and shivering to his master, who heard the magician speak

again with the voice of one who would make himself obeyed. Count Ludwig felt a stream of burning breath on his face; the harsh grating voice called forth three words close beside him. They were followed by a loud subterranean rumbling, and the rushing of many wings fanning the air as they passed. A loud peal of thunder succeeded, the moon again burst forth, and the count again found himself alone with his former companions.

Faithful to his instructions, he had not uttered a word; amazed though he was at all he beheld, and curious to know what would follow, and how he was to be put in possession of his beautiful but refractory baroness.

The little ape for the third time kindled the fire, and from the box he pulled forth a bleeding tongue, cut from the throat of a depraved and lying monk, and grinning, flourished it before the wizard, who nodding, the imp put it among the flames, and then cutting some of his fantastic and wild capers, leaped from the circle into the wood, soon returning with three immense toads, which he threw into the fire one after the other. As the flames scorched them, they uttered loud cries, and their executioner clapping his hands, danced round the brazier, quickly gabbling some grotesque rhymes.

The wizard's chant again pealed forth melan-

choly and low. From the quivering, aspen-like shaking of his long robe, Count Ludwig perceived how he trembled. His face was pale and rigid as that of a corpse; whilst his eyes flashed and seemed straining to behold somewhat beyond the sight of mortals. The heavens were again enveloped in thick massy clouds, rent by forked and flashing lightning. Again the winds burst forth, not increasing gently, but with a sudden howling burst. The thunder rolled on without a pause, cracking and roaring, and echoing among the surrounding mountains. The lightning ceased not during one short second. The flashes grew into one pale, glimmering, dazzling-blaze, lighting the dark clouds, and the bending, bowing tops of the tufted trees. Huge hailstones dashed down, rattling and bounding on the dry earth, the crackling fall of uprooted trees was heard, mingling with the overpowering, irresistible tempest.

Still the wizard continued his chant, and seizing the sword, raised on high the third and last skull. The lightnings played around the shining blade—the trembling voice of the old man loudly called "Zamah!"

The loud voice he had already heard sounded on Count Ludwig's ear, but he could distinguish no words. Again, and more loudly, the wizard

shouted "Zamah!" and still held the sword aloft. Again, and nearer still, the voice replied,

"I come!" it cried. The magician cast away the skull. The wind increased threefold, and whirled it over the trees. Count Ludwig saw a bare pair of arms dart from them and catch it.

"Zamah—come quickly!" cried the wizard; and dropping the sword, he sank on his knees, and hid his eyes with his trembling hands.

The fury of the storm increased. The thunder, the lightning, the hailstones, and the wild wind, seemed let loose for the world's destruction. The trees round them fell crashing to the earth; whilst those whose strength saved them, strained and moaned in the blast. Despite the hail, the magic fires burnt.

The count fixed his eyes, aching with the vividness of the lightning, on the spot whence the voice had come. The demon approached. He beheld him leaping over the prostrate trees, and with a bound he stood beside the circle.

He stood firmly, erect, as though he defied the war and riot about him. Above the common stature of men, he rolled his wild and ferocious black eyes around. His long shaggy hair and beard were fiery red; clothing he had none; his hands, lips, beard, and breast, were stained and dirty with blood, and he carried a short hunting-

spear, which he firmly grasped. A pack of huge lean dogs followed him, yelping, snarling, and quarrelling among themselves. They dragged with them a gnawed, corrupted, half-eaten, human body, over which they snapped and fought. The little ape on seeing them, frisked from the circle, dragged first one, then the other from his prey, exciting them to fight, clapping his hands and grinning as they added their demoniac outcry to the roar of the hurricane.

"What wouldst thou?" roughly asked the demon of the count, who, hardly able to stand against the storm, stood with bowed head, and gasping for breath, answered,

"The Baroness von Kranzfelt for my own."

"Give me thy soul after death, and she is thine," said Zamah, in his harsh and roaring voice.

"I will, and do!" returned Count Ludwig.

Now, as he had about as much idea of his own soul after death, as that of an unborn child, the worthy count knew not what he had done. The little apish imp had suspended his sports as he listened, and returning to the circle, took a long gold pen from the leaden box, and darting on one of his canine playmates, seized him by the muzzle, and holding him tight, plunged it into his eye, pulling it forth full of the black colour-

ing. The dog gave a piteous howl, and snapping round, flew at the ape, who, with a leap, regained the circle, and putting his thumb to his nose and spreading forth his fingers at the howling dog, presented the pen and a written parchment to the count.

"Sign your name here," said the imp, pointing to the place, "and the woman is yours safe and sound."

"I cannot write," replied the bold warrior.

"Make your mark then, that will do as well," rejoined the ape.

Count Ludwig took the pen, and made his clumsy mark, the demon looking on the while as he leant on his spear, with a ferocious, contemptuous, satisfied sneer.

The ape gave him the parchment. The storm now raged more violently than ever. The demon raised his spear. The lightnings flashed round its point.

"You are mine!" he said to the count. "Mine, body and soul—body now and soul hereafter.' He put forth his spear and touched him. The fiendish dogs gathered round, loudly barking, their fierce eyes gleaming as they vainly endeavoured to overleap the circle and seize him. Poor Wolf, too, barked his loud, honest bark in defence of his master, and rushing from his

magic protection, the faithful beast in one instant was the prey of the hellish pack.

The touch of Zamah's lightning-tipped spear, caused the count's forehead to burst out in sweat; his body trembled, his knees smote together, his head swam; the tempest roared in one confused hurly-burly in his ears, the ground appeared to sink from him; he no longer felt the cutting hail-drops, the lightning seemed to scorch his very brain, his dazzled, burning eyes closed, he reeled, and the stout Count Ludwig fell senseless to the ground.

CHAPTER VI.

How long the count, who had so boldly faced the evil one, remained in a state of unconsciousness, he was never able to ascertain.

It was one rainy evening, as a summer shower quickly and briskly fell, and the declining sun shot his red beams among the rain-drops, and darted through a stained window, reflecting the colours that formed arms and monsters on the oak-floor of an octangular cabinet, richly gilt, that in that very cabinet Count Ludwig again became conscious of earthly things.

That cabinet was in a turret of the Baroness von Kranzfelt's castle, and therein sat the baroness, and with her the deluding, bragging, de Beaugency.

No *chaperone*, either lively or drowsy, was there on guard. The Baroness Bertha had, by

degrees, dispensed with suite and attendance. To be *tête-à-tête* with her devoted Frenchman was all she wished.

The sprain he had so long cherished, so long made himself interesting about, under the care of the old wizard, uncle of his enthralled lady, ceased to exist; and de Beaugency could now strut, and caper, and point his toes, and show his calves off to advantage, and fly to meet his love, as gracefully and with as much *souplesse*, spring and spirit, as a *premier sujet* on the opera stage. Nothing was done without a grimace and an attitude, and then a quick look to discover if his little efforts made their due impression. Such throwing himself on his haunches, such belabouring his pouting pigeon style of breast, such graceful sinking into his chair, such looking over his shoulder along his extended arm to his middle finger, such *débonnaire* bowing, such alternations of expression from pride to tenderness, as this noble Sieur de Beaugency exhibited, could not fail of doing execution, and in truth, so they did.

To the German dame, accustomed to stiff, stalwart figures, firm and strong, without much grace or manner, heavy, tranquil visages, and unaffected manly deportment, the monkey tricks exhibited for her approval were—I blush for

my sex as I record it—were but too captivating.

Though he talked largely of "*Le casque au front,*" she had never seen him so decorated; but "*La guitarre à la main,*" whenever he could pounce upon it, was his favourite mode of attack. On the evening in question he sang, and played, and sighed, and smiled, and mused, and started, and sang, and played again.

He meditated striking a decisive blow. He took it for granted that he *must* be loved, passionately adored, worshipped with the most complete idolatry in return for all his antics. The baroness, as I have often said, *did* love him, and he told himself that the fair, beautiful woman, was "*pas mal pour une Allemande,*" and with her fortune would not disgrace him at Paris, and therefore he resolved to speak.

All his ditties were chosen, with a view to softening her tender spirit yet more. She sighed, and leant her cheek on one hand, playing with her light hair, and gold chain alternately with the other, as she listened to a dismal minor, given forth with most languishing, love-sick tone, and up-turning of eyes.

The song ended, de Beaugency fixed his regards on her, then shivered, and looked at the lute-strings, over which he slowly promenaded his spare

fingers, and she looked at him and said nothing, and then again played with the fretted links of her chain. There was a long silence, only disturbed by the preluding notes of the lute, soft and murmuring, and the baroness' quick breathing—a calm portending some convulsion; and it was at this precise time that big Count Ludwig found himself, he knew not how, in their presence. They did not heed him; they neither of them moved, or changed, or seemed to see him; for see him they did not, they were not conscious that he was there; they thought themselves alone; not that the "great passion" blinded, or rendered them insensible to what passed, but the *quondam* slayer of beasts of prey was—invisible.

He was invisible to others and to himself. He could no longer behold his own sinewy arms and hands, his well-turned legs, and small feet; he no longer felt the sensation of massy strength he once felt. The ponderous count felt airy as a sylph, transparent as air, light as a vapour. He could well discern every thing that surrounded him, distinguish words, feel all moral sensations; but see, hear, speak, feel bodily, touch, taste, smell he could not. How should he? The count's soul was in the cabinet, but where his body was,—must be known in another place.

"What the devil's the matter with me now, I wonder?" was the elegant apostrophe of this refined Saxon's soul, as he hovered in the air a naked spirit, and tried in vain to sink and stand upon *terra firma*, instead of bobbing about like a cork on the water. Despite his efforts, his soul took up its station where it had ever been, and whence its *surtout* alone had kept it—that is, close to the baroness, and there he surveyed at his leisure the beauty which had brought him into his present wonderful position. The tickling symphony de Beaugency had been playing, ceased; the lute was laid on one side, and the musician bending towards the baroness, spoke in a suppressed, lachrymose tone,

"Beautiful lady! the fatal time has arrived which must see me wandering far from all my heart holds dear. I will act as a man, I will not betray the august blood of my house. It costs me an effort, but I must return to my country, to my beautiful France—I must return alone, abandoned, my heart devoured by the flames of the most tender love!"

The lovely Bertha turned pale at these words. Must she then lose the dear, conceited creature who had captivated her? The poor, simple baroness, was not an adept in the art of concealing her feelings. Her voice trembled, and her eyes grew moist, as she replied,

"Sieur de Beaugency, you are not yet sufficiently re-established to undertake that journey. You must not leave—you must not go yet."

"Ah! most charming of women, I could languish at your side for ever. The world without you is but a vast desert. The sighs of de Beaugency, far from her whom he adores, will mingle sadly with the air of heaven. Honour calls me. I am the last of my house—I must fly to represent it in the capital of my glorious country—I must forget in the field of arms the sovereign beauty———. What do I say? Forget! Ah! no, I feel that it is impossible. The image imprinted on my burning heart must descend with me to the tomb. By day, by night, it never leaves me. Unhappy de Beaugency! But where is my ardour, where is my love leading me? Presumptuous man that I am! Ah! angelic being, may I—dare I hope that—"

The baroness had shaded her eyes with her little white hand as this flowery appeal proceeded, and the orator had perceived a bright tear fall from beneath the soft pink palm. He drew nearer to her, and gracefully kneeling beside her, pressed his clasped hands ardently beneath his chin, approaching his elbows together, reclining his head towards his shoulder, contract-

ing and elevating his eyebrows, upturning his eyes, and showing his pearly teeth beneath his dark mustache and ruby lips.

Count Ludwig's soul, to his perfect astonishment, had understood every word of de Beaugency's language, and raged as he listened, and longed for his own strong arm to put an end to it. He was immaterial, and his wish fruitless; he raged and stormed, but had no instrument wherewith to gratify his rage; he could only remain passive, and his passiveness was purgatory to him. Worse yet remained for the unfortunate soul.

"Those tears," de Beaugency began, in a faint and languishing voice, such as a *bravo amoroso* on the stage might have used, to awaken the tender sentiments of boarding-school young ladies, and send them back to their forlorn academy, there to dwell on his radiant image—there, among bread-and-butter, milk-and-water, and little girls, to sigh for him,—"those tears recal me to life! Behold at your feet the most devoted of men, the most unfortunate of lovers, unless you deign to console me. Bertha," he continued, gasping and seizing the hand which rested on her lap,—"Bertha—yes Bertha,—I dare pronounce that revered, that adored name! Bertha, do you wish to see me expire before.

your eyes. No! your tender bosom cannot form so barbarous a wish."

He paused. Count Ludwig's soul strove to approach him but could not move an inch. It did not exclaim, for souls cannot, but it thought thus:

"Vile, bragging, lying Frenchman! Oh! if I could but get at you! What can that red-headed devil intend by playing me this foolish trick? Oh! oh! oh!" he would have roared, but he had not wherewith to roar, and de Beaucency spoke again.

"Dear Bertha, do not turn away your graceful head! Let your beautiful eyes shine upon me, and dispel the clouds from my oppressed soul. Are those soft tears shed for me? Adored Bertha, I die for you! I am no longer master of myself, my flame can no longer remain a secret. Yes, I die for you; say that you love me, and save from death a noble, a valiant man, who would live but for you!"

With these words he gently withdrew the baroness' hand from her eyes, and fixing his on her face, with a look of anxious tenderness, panted and gasped, whilst Count Ludwig's mental part poured forth, for its own benefit and edification, a torrent of threatening and abuse, both of which were lost on the man they were

intended for. He, with a sigh, whispered, "Bertha, do you love me?"

"I do," she gently answered, and as de Beaugency pressed both her hands to his heart, her rosebud mouth for one second touched his high, white forehead.

"Damnation!" thought the tortured soul, "how is she to be mine, then? Let me but get at him, I'll strangle the long-necked ape. Bertha! Baroness! Ho! hallo! Pest! I've no voice, I can't move, I can't make myself heard. The devil! I shall go mad!"

Thus raged the gentle spirit, and again his tormentor spoke.

"Dear Bertha, most charming of women, you have filled my soul with the most tender, the most lively joy. Will you then be mine? Will you then follow me to my dear France, and there be the idol of de Beaugency, the most blessed of men?"

The happy baroness in her pretty broken French, and sweetest smiles, promised to become *la dame* de Beaugency, and the evening passed lightly and joyfully for the two lovers, but far otherwise for the soul of poor unfortunate Count Ludwig.

CHAPTER VII.

All rested in the castle, except the old wizard and the count's soul. Snores in every variety of sound, from the chaplain's note of plethora and apoplexy, to the baroness' sleepy breathing, just verging in the most delicate manner on that most unsentimental sign of life floated on the air in the chambers of the various sleepers. Divers visions beset them, according to their different dispositions and pursuits, some perchance ruled by the quality of the supper which each had taken.

The warlike de Beaugency dreamt, but his night thoughts were not of the blood and battle that graced his speech, neither of the lady he had won. No—he saw himself surrounded by gay youths in Paris, he saw dice, cards, and heaps of gold and silver; and these heaps of

gold and silver were composed of coin, each of which possessed a delicate pair of little legs, on which they all ran across the table to him, and jumped into a sack he held ready to receive them.

The baroness dreamt, and her dreams were composed of the events of that happy evening, varied *au gré des songes.* In all, De Beaugency was present, and her light dreams vanished into quiet sleep, again to reappear in their soft and joyous forms.

The old wizard was reading illegal books in foreign tongues, pounding and concocting various herbs and drugs, and doing all he could in a quiet way to give himself to the evil one.

The count's soul hovered near the sleeping and quiet baroness. The soul, as wide awake as though it had been noonday, beheld his beautiful love in her calm repose, and admired and blustered, and lost himself in conjectures—How long his new and wonderful state was to last, where his body could possibly be, how he became what he then was, why he was invisible, why he could not detach himself from the Baroness von Kranzfelt, how she was to be his, since she had given herself to the Frenchman, and he was, as he expressed it, "no better than a fool of a ghost?" All these questions were put, but found no solution.

How it was, too, that he had understood de Beaugency, as he spoke French, excited his astonishment and admiration. He called upon, he invoked the demon of the forest of Storberg, and the little imp monkey; but neither came to his assistance, and the immaterial part of Count Ludwig remained suspended in air, just beneath the canopy of the beautiful Bertha's huge damask bed the livelong night, watching the sleeping beauty, and then storming and raging, and, as he did so, hearing the jeering laugh he had heard in the forest.

Day followed night, and night day, and day and night Count Ludwig was ever present with the baroness, and yet the tender vicinity gave him small satisfaction. It was no pleasure to witness her lover's *petits soins*, and the delight with which they were received; to hear his love-songs, and their speeches of happiness to come; to long for an arm of flesh wherewith to chastise his self-complacent rival, basking with impunity in the smiles of the woman he had sold himself to obtain; to hear the arrangements and orders made and given for the marriage ceremony; to see his adored baroness, when le Sieur de Beaugency left her, throw herself into his chair; to hear her sigh, and sighing say his name;

or, taking up the lute, sing the songs that he had taught her.

This was a hard life, and tedious to bear. With the loss of his body, his spirit had gained sensibility, and things which when he walked on earth, and eat and drank, and made merry, moved him not, now that he skimmed and floated about in the air, he felt, and feeling was stung by them. His phlegm was corporal—now his perceptions and passions had fair play, and finely they tormented him. Besides, he retained his bodily appetites without the means of serving them; and poor Count Ludwig discovered, what many a man has discovered when too late, that committing himself with the emissaries of his satanic majesty, entailed on the unfortunate wight who had done so, much vexation and small profit. Had he been told he should pass days and nights with the baroness, how well it would have sounded, how elated the sturdy count would have been! He was with her continually, and what did it profit him?

If he was ever finally to call her his own, he knew not; but he suspected, and appearances warranted his suspicions, that he had in some way or other been regularly "*done*" by the gigantic fiend he had negotiated with.

A day or two after his entrance into his new

state of being, he was destined to hear what had become of himself, or rather what his fellow mortals decided had become of him.

The baroness was riding abroad, and de Beaugency escorted her on a curvetting horse, which, in truth, showed him off to small advantage; by some unaccountable cause the handsome *condottiere* not seeming so well at ease on his back as on the ground, save and except when the playful horse walked, and then the rider ventured upon some of his fascinating grimaces and attitudes. The instant the walk was changed into a quicker pace, the showing off vanished, being exchanged for a timid, embarrassed stiffness—a hand prone to seek the mane, and eyes firmly fixed between the courser's ears.

The attendants and squires who followed made their remarks, and gave play to their heavy fun at the Sieur de Beaugency's expense, and the spirit of Count Ludwig at its post, skimming through the pure air breathed by his baroness, as he beheld the Frenchman's equestrian purgatory, felt all the mental sensation of laughter, though he could not roar forth as he roared in former days; for alas! the huge chest and throat, the wide and ruddy mouth, were no longer his.

Though the count was *on detachment* from his body, yet he was without some of the privileges

supposed to be possessed by the ghostly part of man. He could not see the souls of others, or the thoughts of mortals; he could not transport himself in an instant from place to place; he had no communion with the world of spirits; he was a solitary being; his own thoughts were the only ones known to him, those who were with the baroness were the only persons whose voices he ever heard—the poor count lived "alone in his glory."

The baroness took the direction of his castle, and he swam through the air with her. They passed the plain where he had first heard a supernatural voice, and seen supernatural eyes. Halfway over they saw a sturdy horseman, galloping across the common towards them, mounted on a round, compact nag, with flowing mane and tail, and long hair to his fetlocks. Now this horseman, as he met them, pulled off his cap, and made his obeisance to the noble lady. De Beaugency remembered him. He was poor Count Ludwig's esquire, and willing to raise himself in his love's estimation, in very childish German he questioned the man touching his lord, throwing as much of the contemptuous and sneering into his speech as possible.

Many winks and knowing looks passed among the cavalcade behind him as he did so. The Gaul

was not popular, and the serving-men rejoiced at the esquire's answer, given with an air of caricature deference; whilst de Beaugency sat like the *commendatore* in "Don Juan," firm as a rock, seeing that his steed only pawed the ground, and champed his bit as he stood.

"Sir," said the esquire, "I fear that you will never obtain that, which, from your chivalrous conduct towards my master, and the courage you appear to possess, was no doubt your desire. I mean the opportunity of trying whether or no, your smart sword is quite rusted into its velvet jacket."

De Beaugency snorted, scowled, and cleared his throat. The esquire, who still remained uncovered, gave him no time to reply, but turning to the baroness, continued,

"The count, noble lady, left his castle some evenings since, and though we have scoured the whole country round, seeing that he did not return as expected, we have been unable to find him. A carter going through the forest of Storberg, found his charger, the large gray he rode at the tournament, lying dead, his hind-quarters about the crupper marked with a hot iron."

"Ah!" thought the count, "that was done by that cursed little monkey's drumming heels."

An exclamation of surprise from the baroness followed the esquire's words.

"He has fled from my arm!" cried the Frenchman.

"Your pardon, sir," said the esquire, "my master was never known to fly from the flapping of a goose's wing. The horse was found dead by the mad woman's ring, and —"

"What is that?" interrupted the baroness.

"Why, noble lady, a clear space in the forest, haunted by the ghost of a poor woman, deceived some hundred years ago, by one of the count's ancestors. She went mad, and rushing one night into the wood with a saw, she sawed her baby's head nearly off, and was found dead the next morning. Since then she haunts the place; and on a still night you may hear her for miles round screaming like a peacock, but this is only now and then. I never heard her. Well, it is thought that the count must have lost his way, and come across her, and the devils they say run wild about there on stormy nights, and that night there was such a storm I never saw before, and so most likely he was carried off by the bad spirits. He never had much respect for them, or any thing else, not even for that brave gentleman by your side."

"Oh! that's how it is, is it?" thought the

spirit; "they little think who is so near them."

"And what are you going to do?" said the baroness.

"Why, mighty lady, the count's little nephew is his heir. His kindred are to meet to-morrow, and a number of the clergy. The priests will do what they can towards finding out if he is with good spirits or bad; and if he is not forthcoming, the little gentleman will be lord of the castle. I shall go to the wars. I can't serve a boy after the good, stout, dare-devil count."

Bowing, he trotted off, and the baroness and her suite moved on.

"And so," thought the count, "here am I like the wind, only visible to the pigs, I suppose—without body, meat, or drink, to see this fool of a Frenchman make love to my Bertha under my nose. No—I have none, and no fighting and no hunting, and no feasting; and little fat Wilhelm is to be put in possession of my fortress by those waddling priests, because they are, I suppose, well payed to swear what they know nothing about. Hang that devil!—what can I do?"

Evening was coming on, the sun setting behind the mountains, and the count perceived a quantity of dark bodies like porpoises, turning over in the air and then disappearing each calling out "Poor Count Ludwig!" as it did so;

and taking up the call from each other in such-wise, that it never ceased for an instant till the baroness crossed her drawbridge, and the count saw them all turn towards him, opening dolphin-like mouths and fishy eyes, giving him one loud cheer, and all disappearing with a plunging roll and a taunting laugh, as he passed with the baroness under the arched and echoing gate-way.

CHAPTER VIII.

On the Baroness von Kranzfelt's wedding-day, what bustle, what uproar, what merriment reigned in her castle! Dawning day looked through loopholes and windows on the busy inhabitants. Cooks betook themselves to their labours even then, grooms already sought the stables, pages left their beds, impatient to behold and put on their new garments, waiting-women arrayed themselves, and touched and retouched themselves a full hour beyond their wont, whilst the old wizard who had spent the livelong night in his occult labours, sought his bed in the top room of his turret, where a shout or a loud laugh, reached now and then without disturbing his repose.

Count Ludwig's spirit did not awake, for it never slept, but it perceived the pretty baroness

open her blue eyes, and it was conscious of the din, the singing, whistling, shouting, laughing, and hurry, the castle was full of. Alas! poor count, how dejected, how angry, how taken in, his tormented soul felt. When he made his mark on the fiend's parchment, he had expected that by some magic, some *tour de force*, some satanic device, his wish would have been brought to pass, and the baroness would have been made his countess. Not at all! here was a riot, an uproar, a confusion going on, all got up because the widow of the rich Baron von Kranzfelt was to be that day married a second time, and that not to him, her most devoted count, who had hunted and fought for her, had drunk deep in honour of her, had thought of her, though thought was not much in his way, and who had finally been cheated out of his soul for her, and yet it was not to him after all that she was to be married, but to a French *petit maître*, a man who had arrived under her roof with only the suit he wore, a valise of rubbish, a stock of Parisian impudence, and as many fabulous histories as he could well invent and dispose of.

Isidore de Beaugency was in truth a certain Maître Pierrot, sirname he had none, a man to whom his father and his mother were unknown. His earliest reminiscences carried him back to

days which saw him a handsome little tawney boy, running begging about the streets of Paris, under the auspices of a jolly beggar maimed in the wars, and who gained his livelihood by exciting the compassion of the multitude by his legless trunk, and recounting in return for their money, to those who would listen to him, long stories, all untrue, of his adventures in distant lands.

This man, who was called *le Père Caboche* saw, and took interest in the *soi-disant* Sieur de Beaugency, and to show his affection instructed him in the arts and mysteries of begging, cheating, pilfering, and feigning the most heart-rending tears and sobs. He gave him the name of Pierrot, and the tithes of all he earned, though in time Pierrot, in addition to *le Père Caboche's* tithes, kept back a quarter of his day's work, being thereunto prompted by his happy nature.

Pierrot had legs, *le Père Caboche* had none; Pierrot made use of his to run away from *le pauvre Père Caboche*, who had no means to pursue the ungrateful little rascal, or to recover the five gold pieces, sown in the crown of the dirty old velvet cap the veteran wore, and which Pierrot whisked off his head, and banging the door of the hut they inhabited, darted off with the cap to the good city of Paris. Now, he was

instigated to this unprincipled act, partly from having seen a party of *jongleurs* and monkeys, whose dirty finery and feats of address and dexterity charmed him, and partly by a love of change, and a natural ingratitude, selfishness, and want of principle, not ameliorated by his early life and education.

He presented himself before his admired *jongleurs* with a confident air, and a manly swagger, which they with one accord returned by a loud laugh. Pierrot, nothing daunted, told them he intended doing them the honour of joining their corps, said they would find him an apt scholar and a man of honour, spent one gold piece in treating them, sang his best songs, was carried very tipsy to bed, and admitted into their fraternity without one dissenting voice.

An apt scholar they did find him. He was a handsome, well-made boy, and soon outdid them all in dancing and tumbling, whilst none of them excelled him in carrying off poultry, and other *provisions de bouche* in the villages they passed through.

At twenty he had made love to all the women of the juggling troop, and had, without other resentment than that of a vaunting, threatening, tongue, received thrashings dire from every one of the men and boys. The women admired and

petted him, the men despised, envied, and hated him. Pierrot lived on the fat of the land; his female friends reserved all the smartest decorations, the most dainty *bonnes bouches* for Pierrot, and Pierrot grew more impertinent, more handsome, more conceited, and more disgusting, from day to day.

Among the company was a sturdy, surly, double-jointed youth, beetle-browed, and speckled with smallpox, and this youth was enamoured of a fair damsel, who scoffed at his suit, and bestowed all her favour on Pierrot. Now, if Pierrot had rested content with what the gods sent him, and without bragging had basked in her smiles, Pierrot might have dwelt safely. This was not his way; he lost no opportunity of flaring his success before his rival's eyes, and boasting to him of soft words his black-haired love had whispered to him, winding up by taunts and laughter, and then taking to his heels when the beetle brows began to knit, and the double-jointed fists to clench.

Spite of his nimble heels, however, vengeance lighted on him when he least looked for it. His rival resolved to be rid of him. He was treacherous, and dissembled his ire; flattered Pierrot, laughed at his boastful speeches, and gave him his way. The successful lover gave

into the pitfall. He and his ugly rival were looked upon as friends, and Pierrot's reign was soon over.

The travelling troop stayed one afternoon to rest, and passed the scorching time of day in a wood. Pierrot pulled out his dice—his *soi-disant* friend found wine. They retired from the rest, who lying beneath the trees, ate, drank, and slept, dirty and lazy as the creations of Murillo, whilst the two rivals plunging into the depths of the wood, sat down beneath the bright, green, rustling leaves, by the sight of a deep running stream, to drink and play.

Pierrot in high spirits laughed, sang, boasted, played, and won. He had no thought of rejoining his comrades. Evening found the gamesters where they played, their bottles and the double-jointed youth's pockets drained, and Pierrot's brain in a merry whirl. His rival was cool and sober; but poor Pierrot did not mark the malignity of his looks, as he scowled on him with his little pig's eyes—he knew not the mischief plotted against him, till he suddenly found himself stretched on his back, the *jongleur's* hard knee on his breast, and his hands held fast, whilst a rope was quickly turned and tied about his wrists.

Pierrot first stared, then roared, then kicked.

His friend struck him over the mouth, and pulling out his knife threatened to end his cries and his days together, if he was not silent. The threats were effectual. Pierrot was mute. His pockets were emptied into his companion's, who sitting astride on his legs, tied them as he had done his hands, and then raising him up, deposited him in the stream, standing him on his feet. The rapid water ran fast around him, and reaching to his shoulders, all that was visible of Maître Pierrot, were his throat and his terrified countenance, surmounted by his tawdry cap and dirty feather.

His friend, with a mocking bow, pulled off his *bêret*, and bade him farewell.

"*Adieu, mon mignon!*" said he. "Have you any little delicate words I can carry to Margot for you? How fresh and cool you are this warm evening! If you don't make haste, you will never overtake us. Come! shut your mouth. You know what I told you, don't scream. Adieu —I am going to represent you with Margot till your return, and the longer you put that off the better for you. *Tu m'entends,*" he continued, just drawing the back of his knife across his own throat with a significant wink, and then jerking one or two stones at Pierrot's head, with good aim and effect, he walked doggedly off, to

follow the road his comrades had traversed many hours before.

These, at least the male portion, heard his narrative with unbounded applause. Margot and her female companions were made to believe that Pierrot had run away; upon which Margot's tears began to fall; when in stepped female vanity much hurt, to represent to her that a man who could thus desert her was beneath her notice; wherefore her tears, after an effort or two and many sighs, were wiped away, and in pure spite, all her favours were bestowed on the double-jointed tumbler; whilst the other damsels being deprived of their Pierrot, each supplied herself with another lover, some with two or three, according to the capaciousness of their tender hearts.

Pierrot, meanwhile, as soon as he supposed his tormentor to be removed beyond the reach of his cries, began to send them forth rapidly, loudly, and in good earnest.

"*Au secours! Au meurtre! Aux voleurs! Au feu! Aux assassins!*" resounded through the wood, and echo as in all cases of ineffectual appeals in such a locality, was the only creature, if creature she can be called, who answered poor water-imprisoned Pierrot.

Tired out and parched, he ceased his outcry.

Twilight was fading, and he, afraid to move lest he should fall, with peevish oaths was beginning to think of resigning himself to his fate, and a wet berth for the night, when he heard a distant whistle, loud, and clear, and joyous, which broke off into a song equally blithe; and Pierrot saw advancing through the trees a young groom, on a wide-backed black steed, which he rode without saddle to the water's edge.

"*Eh! qui diable est tu, et que fais tu ici?*" cried the young groom, as he slackened his hold of the halter to let the horse drink, whilst he looked with surprise at Pierrot.

Poor luckless Pierrot was never at a loss, and gave the groom to understand that he was an honest man, and that rogues had placed him in his dolorous situation, after robbing him of all he possessed.

"*Diantre!*" replied the groom, raising his eyebrows, "I suppose you wish to be pulled out of your bath?"

Therewith he tied his horse to a tree, and stooping down on the bank, extended his arms, and Pierrot doing the same, he enabled him to hop slowly to the water's edge and stand dripping on the dry earth.

His next move was to entreat his liberator to give him a seat behind him, and a night's lodg-

both of which he undertook to do, and off they trotted, Pierrot clinging fast to the groom, and entertaining him *en route* with songs, jokes, and fun, which entirely gained him all the horse-boy's good will. Their ride ended at a castle-gate, and the dripping *jongleur* soon found himself in a dirty stable dress, whilst his saturated embellishments were dried at a huge kitchen-fire.

Half an hour sufficed him to captivate all the grooms, scullions, cooks, and idlers of the castle. The high-raftered kitchen echoed with their uproarious laughter. Pierrot stood on his head in a plate, swallowed a knife, put a lighted candle into his mouth, balanced the spit on his nose, paraded the kitchen standing on a burly man-at-arms's shoulders, and then ran round it like a wheel, vaulted over the table, and again inverting himself, drank the health of his spectators head downwards. These, and many other feats, were too enchanting to permit his admirers to see him depart the following day—to persuade him to remain, was not difficult. He did remain, and "repeated his performances."

Such talent could not remain hidden. The young lord of the castle, a *jouvenceau*, gay and gallant, was soon made sensible of the genius beneath his roof, and seeing him was pleased with him. His *tournure* and face were good.

Pierrot was soon dressed as a page, and promoted to be the young seigneur's favourite attendant. He and his master were of one spirit, full of fun and mischief, conceited, boasting, timid, two *fanfarons* in the strictest sense of the word.

Maître Pierrot cut his former comrades on his elevation, passed even his friendly groom *le nez en l'air*, obtained their contempt and dislike, but retained his own esteem and good opinion. He dropped all vestige of his former profession; no more tumbling and tricks; nothing remained but the upright, jaunty carriage, and swaggering air. His master's comrades were young men of his own stamp. Pierrot, always in attendance, petted and flattered, was the soul of the company, and with his natural quickness, soon learnt their manners, adopted their deportment, which, grafted on the *jongleur*, made him the creature we have seen. Although this seigneur had no devoted love of arms, he followed his countrymen to Italy. To serve under Gaston de Foix was the wish of the youth of France. "*Il faut suivre la mode*," and the young lord, and his splendid armour, horses, and retinue, made a part of his army.

Pierrot followed him in his non-military capacity of attendant, generally travelling in a litter

which accompanied them. He sang, danced, gamed, made love, polished his manners, saw his master brought from an attack dead and bleeding to his tent, collected every thing valuable he could carry, and stole off alone and on foot, to return to his native land.

He was not long burdened with his booty; other straggling rogues soon relieved him of it; nothing remained but his stick and his shabby valise.

He entered Germany, and lived on the public. His old feats and tricks stood him in good stead, and found him ofttimes food and lodging; and when they failed in this, his dexterity of hand helped him to provisions.

He was one moonlight night engaged like the fox in the song, robbing a hen-roost. Already a white and *dodue* hen, with wrung neck, was under his mantle—his short, his dandy mantle, when the trusty house-dog opened a fire of barks upon him. The farmer sitting at his repast, heard the sound. Open flew the farm-door, out burst the farmer, off ran Pierrot, chased both by man and dog.

The fat hen was sacrificed, and thrown to the dog. The bait was unheeded, and man and dog kept on their course. Pierrot flew like the wind, vaulted a bank, and fell into a ditch on

the other side. The bank was in shade, the pursuer lost sight of his game, called back his dog, picked up the defunct hen, and returned home.

Pierrot crawled from his green and stagnant ditch. Alas! his ankle was sprained—the sprain rendered his next day's journey excruciating, but that sprain introduced him to the Baroness von Kranzfelt, and with an extempore fiction, the *jongleur*, the *protégé* of *le père Caboche*, the *ci-devant* page, claimed her hospitality.

We have seen how it was granted, and the *suites* thereof.

It was to this Maître Pierrot, this compound of conceit and impudence, that poor Count Ludwig's soul was about to see his dear Bertha, his pretty, foolish, fair-haired baroness united. His soul was vexed as the bridal hour drew near. The bells of the convent church at the foot of the hill were loudly ringing—de Beaugency in his wedding costume saluted his love; she smiling gave him her hand, and followed by her pages and women, she left her castle a widow, and returned a bride. A light and graceful white horse, led by two esquires, bore her to church. Her lover rode by her side, surveying the crowd that eyed him and pointed him out, with a proud but complacent air. The baroness wore a small gold coronet, from which fell a long

and costly veil: her dress of gold brocade, her mantle of crimson velvet, her jewels gorgeous and rich, all seemed too massive for her delicate frame. The veil alone, and the light coronet, assimilated with Bertha.

Poor Count Ludwig! how he raved as his soul took shelter beneath the folds of the veil, gently waving in the breeze, and mingled with her pure breath. He showered imprecations on the cheating fiend's red, rough head, and the deluding monkey imp.

The *cortège* reached the church—the bride and bridegroom dismounted—a troop of monks received, and chanting, preceded them to the altar—the guests, the attendants, the villagers all followed—the organ's tones rolled through the high-arched building, the incense arose, and the choristers' shrill, clear voices, mingled with the deep, the nasal, and the sonorous notes of the monks and priests.

Count Ludwig was spared the pang of actually witnessing the reception of his baroness' hand by the fortunate Pierrot, le Sieur Isidore de Beaugency. As she put her little foot, encased in its velvet shoe, beneath the portal of the church-door, her attendant soul had felt a chill wind issue from it, blowing steadily against him with a great and even force, so

forcibly and steadily, that the entrance of his spirit was effectually prevented. Bertha disappeared in the gloom of the Gothic arches; men women, and children entered *en foule*, and the count, suspended in air, remained excluded, with the horses and their guardians.

The jeering laugh he had heard before sounded loudly in his ears. On the branches of the tall trees round the church, were seated hobgoblins innumerable, leering, grinning, and winking at the poor distressed spirit. Each held in his bony hands a long, narrow glass, and a squat round-bodied bottle, whilst from the assemblage of twirled, long mouths, in every variety of ugliness, burst a mocking chorus.

Fill the bowl!
Ha! ha! ha!
Here's to thee, poor mortal's soul!
Where's thy love?
Ha! ha! ha!
Thy cooing dove!
Ha! ha! ha!
Where's thy body, where thy blood,
Thy rolling, dancing, crimson flood?
Wherefore hang suspended there,
Lazy in the boundless air?
Dwell again in bone and flesh,
Bid them start to life afresh!
Rouse thee, seize thy murd'rous sword,
Sheathe it in the boasting lord!
Wed the soft, the lovely dame,
The fuel of thy scorching flame!

Canst thou not?
Ha! ha! ha!
Ha! ha! ha!
Dost thou wot,
Thy body's——where we will not tell,
Thy soul, the fiend will have to tell.
Poor Count Ludwig!
Ha! ha! ha!
Drain and fill, and drain the bowl!
Here's to thee, poor mortal's soul!

The "poor mortal's soul" groaned in spirit. Cheated and mocked—oh! heavy lot. The chorus continued shrieking discordant, interspersed with the yelling laugh, as the goblins threw back their misshapen heads, thrust out their giraffe-like tongues, and drowned the song of the choir with their demoniac noise.

The count tried in vain to hold some communion with them. Hopping among the branches, he beheld too the little monkey imp. It grinned, it nodded at him, it clapped its little hands, it joined in the chorus.

The grooms holding the horses, looked aloft. The goblins appeared to them as so many cawing rooks, whilst the little monkey hopped about, to their vision, in the semblance of a pert magpie.

Stones flew up at them, but to their assailants' wonder, not one of them moved.

The procession of singing churchmen leaving

the church, effectually scared them. Their chorus, oft repeated, was cut short; each making a hideous grimace at their victim, darted from the branches into the air, and giving a last, long, most unharmonious cheer, vanished in the surrounding atmosphere.

Bertha again mounted her palfrey, de Beaugency was at her side, the spirit again at his post.

The day was spent in revelry; all were happy, all merry, and most of them gaily tipsy. Dancing, singing, eating, drinking, laughing, talking, filled the hours; boars' heads, and such *plats de résistance,* disappeared as snow in the sun. Flask after flask was replenished and emptied.

Alas! poor Count Ludwig, great were thy sorrows; to see thy baroness another's wife, and that without redress—to be conscious that all her smiles were for him—oh! misery. And then to know how bountifully the tables were spread—happy, clay-clad spirits sat around, and ate and drank. There were his favourite dishes, his loved wines, and he full of every inclination to partake of them, and yet without the power so to do. Oh! the wretchedness of such a position—if that of punished souls be like unto it, their torment is great. To retain in spirit the wishes of the body, without retaining that body

to fulfil them, is torment much superior to that of Tantalus and his fellow worthies. How the count envied the guests! The savoury morsels were discussed, the strong wine was added to them; what a situation for a *bon vivan* !—and Count Ludwig had been one!

That festive day was a day of woe to him; and no sleep could fall on him to drown his cares for a few short hours—he watched both day and night, for him there was no repose.—Poor Count Ludwig!

CHAPTER IX.

We must now take a jump, a long one, from Germany to France; and in the city of Paris we shall once again meet le Sieur de Beaugency, his newly-wedded wife, and her faithful attendant, the soul of the bodiless Count Ludwig.

Once married, le Bel Isidore, as Maître Pierrot thought fit to call himself, found small trouble in determining Bertha to give up her country for his. Her castle, her estates, passed into other hands, their value in gold, good solid gold, found its way into de Beaugency's purse, and she soon found *her* way, under his escort, into *la belle ville de Paris.*

Travelling in those days was long and slow, and many a weary day was spent on the road, and meanwhile the count's soul speculated and reflected, it could not do much beside, except

rave a little when Isidore's smiles and gentle speeches roused it to wrath.

It speculated then, and reflected on this wise:

"Patience, patience! I heard of patience when I was lodged in my boy's body, that little, lively, bounding body that grew to such a size and weight, and so smothered my mind. Patience! Ah! it is long since I have thought of patience. My old nurse told me of patience, and said it was a virtue. I never cared much for virtue. Perhaps that same want of care for it put me where I am. Well—never mind! Patience is what I want, that old granny's virtue. That is the only thing to support me under that long-necked, long-shanked fellow's smiles and speeches, Bertha's complaisance to him, and my own lack of body. Patience and Hope. Yes! I must hope—I must hope that she will one day be mine, that I shall one day return to my bones and muscles, and take that coxcomb's place. Oh! Bertha, how could you give yourself to such an atrocious compound? What are women made of—to rebuff such a fighting daredevil as I am—that is, alas! as I was, and to take that timid, conceited, ape of a Frenchman? A Frenchman, too, a being all self and vanity. According to my honest German notions, the happiness of a woman who gives herself to a French-

man, is clean gone for ever—ay, for ever. Here is the first step. He has persuaded her to leave good old Germany, and to go to the land of treachery and monkey-tricks. We shall see what is to follow—no good, I am sure. He will most likely beat her, and spend her money. Silly, pretty little Bertha, why did you, rebuff your honest Count Ludwig?"

Bertha, however, did not, like her German lover's soul, dream of misery or cruelty. De Beaugency's eyes still beamed on her with kindness—his songs, his cares were still for her—the long, tedious journey to her was full of charms and happiness.

Paris received them. Maître Pierrot smiled and chuckled inwardly, as on his neighing horse he rode well dressed, well fed, rich and merry, through the well-known streets, where as an urchin he had loitered, begged in rags and dirt, and rent the air with *le père Caboche's* well-taught, fictitious tears and sobs, of infant misery.

The times were changed for Maître Pierrot. The wheel of Fortune had brought him from the mud of beggary, had rolled him round to the sunshine of prosperity. Who, in le Sieur Isidore de Beaugency, with his feather in his cap and long sword by his side, would have re-

cognised little dirty Pierrot, with no covering for his head save his matted hair; no weapon save the rusty knife, wherewith he cut his eagerly-devoured bread-and-cheese.

Bertha implicitly credited every assertion that fell from his beloved lips; she was soon lodged in a lordly house, which he affirmed to have been the town residence of his ancestors, the town residence of his noble childhood. She believed it, and looked with fond interest on every room and corridor. Good, affectionate, simple Bertha; she deserved a better fate, and so thought the noble count; but his thoughts only served the harrowing purpose of self-tormenting.

De Beaugency in short time gathered round him a throng of kindred spirits. Bertha was taught to look upon them as bright specimens of the aristocracy and *élite* of France, and as such receiving them with the gentle courtesy of a gentle woman, threw away her sweetness on a knot of gamesters and *mauvais sujets*.

Her husband deceived her, and deceived them. With them he passed himself off as the intimate friend, the sworn ally of his dead master, a noble, rich, and powerful. They were men who lived by their bright wits; knights too they were, but knights of the industrious order, *chevaliers d'industrie* by profession and choice, and they jumped

with eagerness at de Beaugency's advances, gladdening beforehand at the cheering prospect of living on and plucking so noble, so rich, so great a man.

Of female society Bertha had none, except that of her women and the somniferous old dame, whose snores we once remarked upon, and who, when she was awake, never let a day pass in which she did not utter guttural regrets for the *sour-krout* of the land of her birth.

Bertha was happy, however, and Count Ludwig's soul saw her pretty mouth smile as she listened to de Beaugency's high-flown speeches.

"Yes, lovely Bertha," he would say, "in giving me your hand, you have given me a source of eternal happiness. What delight to behold you reigning in the mansion of my forefathers, in the halls where, yet a child, I pursued my warlike sports, the halls from which the cruelty of a brother banished your Isidore! What triumph to return and place you here, to behold you receiving my noble guests, dispensing smiles, whilst they fly to fulfil the smallest of your wishes. Long may you live here, beautiful Bertha! to be the joy of my soul, the delight of the most fair city of the greatest nation on earth—the nation where I first beheld the light."

Bertha acknowledged this tissue of figments

in her lisping, broken French; and de Beaugency kissed her little white hand, and then calling for his cloak, cap, and sword, sallied forth to join his uproarious friends, and make the hours fly with wine and riot; whilst she, at her embroidery frame, or walking in her high-walled garden, thought the hours lagged, which passed to him so merrily.

The ethereal count wished them gone, and struggled hard to make his presence felt by her, to speak to her, to touch her. Alas! his efforts were but vain. There he was, no better than a vapour: without parts, without movement of his own, able only to go whither Bertha went, to wait on her like an invisible shadow, if such a contradiction were possible.

He narrowly watched Maître Pierrot; saw him in all his glory, rich and impudent. By degrees he was less frequently wounded by his soft speeches and grimaces, his tender attentions to Bertha; he saw her left alone from day to day, for longer periods each time. He saw her sad looks, her anxious looks, her tears, he was conscious of her sighs. She grieved, and yet Count Ludwig's soul was not displeased. He had sold it to the evil one, and with that evil one's spirit he rejoiced in the hope that her love for de Beaugency might be destroyed.

He saw her alarm when, after watching for the reprobate Pierrot half one long and tedious night, with no companion but her snoring German dame, she heard him singing down the long corridor, and falling against the door of her apartment, burst it open, and tumbled headlong into the room. She shrieked and rushed towards him. With her aid, the aid of her weak and delicate arm, he staggered on his feet again, staring at her with his large, dark, flashing eyes. His flushed cheeks, and disordered hair and dress, terrified her; his sword was on his right side, his long feather drooped down his back, from his cap pushed to the back of his head, his doublet was unbuttoned, his delicately-fine shirt spotted with wine; he balanced himself backwards and forwards on his heels and toes, and grinned vacantly.

"Isidore, dear Isidore—you—you are mad!" whispered Bertha, trembling, and the tears standing in her eyes, whilst she clasped her hands and retreated towards the old woman who was still snoring and puffing her chin in the air, her crossed hands reposing on her fat person, and her mind filled with a picture of Elysian bliss; a dish of smoking *sour-krout*, whose vapour curled around in a lightly-moving cloud, a well-fed portly ham, and a bottle of delicate Rhenish.

"Mad! Oh! no my darling, I'm not mad!" replied the noble husband of poor Bertha. "Mad! *par exemple!* Give me a kiss, *ma petite Be the*—

> 'J'aimons le vin,
> Breuvage divin!'"

So sang Pierrot, reeling to a large chair into which he threw himself, and flinging his long legs over the arm, kicked them up and down, yawning and singing, trying to talk rationally, and blinking at the light of the lamp.

Bertha said nothing, and Count Ludwig for the thousandth time, wished for his strong arm to castigate le Sieur de Beaugency.

Poor Bertha! she had often seen her noble baron, his reason, such as it was, stormed and defeated in his strong skull, by potations deep as a well. She had seen him, and thought it a matter of course: but to behold her darling, her refined, her heroic, her romantic, her sentimental Isidore—the Isidore who had sung so sweetly, and made love so bewitchingly, to see him tumble headlong into the room—to behold him foolishly kicking his legs in the air—to hear him with thick utterance hiccupping drinking-songs, and speaking to her as to a common mortal—to her, his love, his empress, his goddess, the idol of his

Maître Pierrot

R. J. Hamerton.

J'aimois le vin,
Breuvage divin.

Published as the Act directs by Colnaghi & Co. Cockspur St.

devoted heart,—this was an agony too great and too sudden to bear.

She covered her eyes with her hands, and wept bitterly. De Beaugency heard her sobs, and stared at her.

"*Diable! qu'as tu ma mie?*" said he, "what are you crying for? You'll make your eyes all red—all red—all red," and then he gaped and kicked his shoe up to the ceiling, which thence descending on the old German's face, caused her to open one eye, mutter something unintelligible, rub her nose, and compose herself to sleep again. Bertha's tears were not checked by this speech. "Hold your tongue—I—say—Bertha,

'J'aimons le vin
Tra la! la! Tira! lira!
Breuvage divin!
Lira! lira! la!'

I say, Charlot, *mon vieux*, you are cheating." Bertha cried as if her heart was breaking, "*Vas au diable, Berthe, ou tais toi!*

'Il était jadis un coquin,
Qui buvait, buvait du bon vin,
Faisait gente débauche,
Sans frein, et sans réproche!'

et sans réproche. Hallo! where was I?

'J'aimons le vin
Tra la!

Curse it, *la mère Berthe!* can't you be quiet? Bring me—a—cup of—of Burgundy, I say!"

Bertha, so elegantly apostrophized, could bear her feelings no longer; it was but too evident that her dear de Beaugency was in a state of most vulgar, helpless intoxication.

Taking a light, she did not stop to wake her companion, whose snores were rattling in a nasal *solfeggio*, but without looking at Maître Pierrot, who was roaring forth two or three songs confusedly jumbled together, she retreated to her own room, and hid her tears and sorrow in darkness.

Count Ludwig being, like some sentimental young ladies, "all soul," darkness or daylight were alike to him. He beheld all poor Bertha's misery, he was conscious of her sighs, her sobs, her lamentations.

"Cruel, cruel Isidore!" she exclaimed, "can it be that the foolish drunkard I just now beheld is the same fascinating, adorable Isidore received by me in my dear old castle? Oh! Isidore, Isidore, dear, dear Isidore, it must be a dream. If it is a reality I must expire, my heart must break!"

She recalled the tender speeches, the elegant attitudes, the sentimental songs, the soft attentions by which he had won her. In one short

year her elysium was doomed to be destroyed. She had seen le Sieur Isidore de Beaugency, the *soi-disant* representative of a noble house, tumble tipsy on the floor, she had heard his songs of love exchanged for riotous drinking-snatches, and the endearing appellations with which he had been wont to salute her exchanged for reproaches and the plebeian epithet of *la mère Berthe.* The thought was poison. She buried her face in the velvet coverlet, and wearing herself out with tears and misery, sank off to sleep as daylight broke on the good city of Paris.

"Ah, Bertha!" thought the spirit who watched her, "you are rightly punished for throwing yourself and your fortune away on that pretty young gentleman. You must expect worse yet, my poor countrywoman. Your waking thoughts will be somewhat unhappy, I think. Sleep on whilst you can, and forget your follies. What could you expect from a beggarly fellow who hopped into your castle on a stick, and a swollen foot, and into your silly little heart by nonsense and fopperies? Ah! I shall be your lord some day. How, I do not know, but I feel confident that I shall; and then you will see what a husband should be! Then we will eat, drink, and be merry. Barons of beef, boar's heads, all sorts of delicacies; Rhenish, Bur-

gundy, wine without end. Hunt all the morning, feast and dance till night, and into night Plenty of jolly Germans; none of these tight-clad youths, mincing and blustering by turns, who look as if they fed on fried egg-shells, with vinegar for drink. No, no, none of these lady's men whisking about with their thin paws ever on the swords they dare not draw, frowning, and snorting, and looking big—no, no, good down-right Germans! Fellows who can hunt, fight, eat, and drink, and then dance when there is nothing else to be done; fellows whose looks do justice to their good cheer; fellows like me, tall, and strong, and handsome, and ——. Ah, me! what am I thinking? Tall and strong and handsome! For aught I know, I am am neither so tall, so strong, or so handsome, as the steam out of a saucepan! Miserable man! When shall I be in my good, sturdy, healthy, active body again? Oh! Bertha, are you worth the year's purgatory I have undergone? I long for a good carouse with my old set of companions. Oh! the days that are gone, and the nights! There we used to sit, and eat, and drink, and laugh, and one by one drop down comfortably to sleep under the table, and the varlets carried us off and tucked us up in our beds, and then off at daybreak to hunt boars, bears, and

wolves, and back again to eat and drink. My friends eat and drink now, and here am I without a jaw or tooth to help me. Why the brown old jaw, with three black old teeth, that they serve up on a velvet cushion at the convent chapel as a relic, and which I dare say belonged to some old devil of a woman, would be a prize to me! Where are my good square grinders now? Oh! ass that I was to meddle with that ugly ape, the wizard, or the cheating fiend! Oh! fool. Oh! madman."

It is needless to endite the self-reproaches in which the count wiled away the time, whilst Bertha slept. He began to weary of his ethereal state—to wish for his material part—his great, ponderous, gigantic frame, and all the indulgences which he administered to it, in the form of most unwieldy joints, most heavy viands, most powerful and inebriating wines. He could not forget his old propensities. He longed for the woods and forests, the hills and vales, the horses, hounds, and horns, the revelry and solemn riot, to which he had been trained.

It was a heavy tax on his love to have no power of leaving his idol, however great his love might have been, and one little year had rather blunted his ardour. Obliged to flit with her from house to garden, from garden to house, to be

ever within the same walls, with no variety but the change from flower to flower, or from one nondescript animal to another, in her embroidery. To hear the same songs, to be with her alone for hours and hear her sigh, and see her lean her head languidly on her hand, Maître Pierrot rioting the while at her expense. Poor Bertha! she too began to grow discontented, and to compare in solitude a French lover, gay, gallant, and *dévoué*, with a French husband, gay, gallant, and *dissipé*—to see her folly by degrees, and to wish undone the knot that death's skeleton fingers alone can untie.

CHAPTER X.

HAVING once broken the ice, le Sieur de Beaugency made no scruple of appearing before his lady in divers states of intoxication, from the pleasingly excited to the stupidly lumpish.

Her hours were mostly spent in solitude. He, dressed at all points, attended like a true lord, liberally showered her gold about him, caroused and revelled with his vicious companions, gamed and drank deeply, to the ruin of health and fortune—he had no idea of the value of money. How could ragged Pierrot, who thought a few sous wealth, or Pierrot *le jongleur*, who lived on the public, or Pierrot the page, who lived on the fat of the land at his master's expense, know how far money would go? He knew little about it and cared less; all he cared for was to live gaily from day to day. He danced, he sang, he ran in

debt; he swore, he lied, he neglected his poor German wife, the source of all his wealth. His love for her had never been troublesome through its intensity, his racketing life left him no time to cherish it, and consequently it was utterly dispersed by his merrymakings and pleasures.

Sometimes Maître Pierrot forgot that he had a wife, and the fact of his being a husband was unpleasantly revealed to him, when he returned from a thundering carouse, and saw Bertha sitting alone, with downcast sorrowful looks.

Her love was strong for him, and it took a few years of struggling and misery, to cure her of the bad habit she had contracted, of placing the happiness of her heart on a *vaurien* such as Maître Pierrot.

It was pain and grief to see his conduct altered towards her by a sudden plunge into dissipation. There was the lute, where were the musician and his songs? There she was, where was the tender lover, with eyes softly fixed on hers, to be removed with a sigh when she looked towards him. Alas! the times were changed; the musician was giving out merry songs in bad company, the tender lover's eyes were changed into the neglecting husband's, either turned from her with indifference, or upon her with anger, or closed up in deep sleep.

Bertha still loved the man who had wooed her, or rather the remembrance of that charming being, all smiles, and frowns, and sighs, and songs, and attitudes, and *fanfaronades*, and devotion; she could not recognise him in her pettish, insolent husband. *Her* Isidore could never have sworn so vulgarly at her as that husband did, *her* bowing, assiduous Isidore could never have turned from her on his heel, snapping his fingers, and uttering a contemptuous "*Bah!—bêtises!*" as that husband did, when she once, and only once, remonstrated with him on his neglect.

To love that husband was impossible, to forget Isidore equally so, and they became to her distinct personages, the remembrance and the reality.

In time the presence of Maître Pierrot became odious to her, and her softest moments were those spent in his absence, consequently they much preponderated over her bitter ones, as she was seldom disturbed by his intrusion.

Days, and then days and nights, he passed away from home; his house he frequented but when he gave some revellings, such as he delighted in.

Then, from her window, Bertha saw the arrival of impudent-looking *roués*, sniffing the air as

they paced along with conceited strides, drawing in the small of their backs, jerking their heads under their dancing plumes, and nodding familiarly at every pretty face they saw. With them, too, came portly seniors, with rubicund visages and small eyes reposing in whites turned yellow, and cheeks reflecting their hue to their swollen noses, thick dry lips, and short shuffling steps tottering along under the weight of their disfigured bodies, whilst they drew their breath thick and short, and an eternal thirst preyed upon their vitals.

These were gaily welcomed by the perfumed swindler, whose house they sought. His wife never appeared, some of them did not even know that he had one. She from her apartment heard the din of the feast—the hallooing, the singing, the laughing, the quarrelling, anger, and merriment, the sound of all these reached her ear in bursts ; she did not heed them; she cuddled herself down in a quiet state of passive existence, gave her affections to birds, a little dog, and a tame squirrel, worked assiduously at her frame, remembered Isidore with a sigh, but never cast one look into futurity.

It may seem strange, but deserted Bertha, once the sought Baroness von Kranzfelt, was happy, had never been happier in her life. Her

husband's brutality had weaned her from him, she was of a quiet, placid temperament, and Peterkin her squirrel, and Zizi her dog, and her little birds, agreeably filled her heart, and she dwelt contentedly in her solitude.

Count Ludwig, conscious of the revelry that was going on, longed to be one of the party; heartily sick and weary of his ethereal state of being, his spirit chafed and fumed. There sat Bertha calm and placid, her dog at her feet, and her squirrel Peterkin nestling in her bosom, and there he hung at his old post, suspended in air, close to her, unable to say a word to further his cause or help himself; and merriment in which he could not join going on under the same roof with him.

Bertha had entirely forgotten her adorer, stout Count Ludwig. She never spoke of him; in her conversations on bygone times, with her old somniferous German dame, his name was never once mentioned. Little did she think that the very quintessence of that redoubtable count, his ghostly part, was ever near her day and night; through love for her, through dogged resolution, through imp's enticing, had sold his soul for her, and having done so, began to repent him of the deed; and yet not exactly, either, to repent him of the deed, but of the airy mode of being in

which, through some cheatery of the forest-fiend, he had so suddenly found himself launched.

Year had followed year, and the evil one seemed not disposed to ratify their compact. There stuck Count Ludwig's soul without diversion, without variety; accustomed to be ever with Bertha, the charm of novelty thereat had long since vanished; the monotony of her life *he* was to endure; season followed season, night followed day; these were the only breaks in Bertha's existence, and these were none to him. A spirit feels not heat or cold; a spirit is unaffected by light or darkness; but a spirit can remember the joys of his past life, and Count Ludwig's could look back upon them, and for them still long.

In short, Count Ludwig's spirit had become a very irritable, moody, discontented spirit, without joy or gladness, full of bitter reflections, without hope and without peace. It was no longer kept down by his huge body, it had found a spirit's activity, but nought whereon to employ that activity, It preyed upon itself, it fretted itself, it was miserable, it was in the power of a demon. He had voluntarily rendered it so, he reaped the fruits of his rashness, and cursed his deceiver, and not himself for his folly.

His deceiver mocked his wretchedness—what

devil does not mock the misery he occasions? It was delight to him to see the bitter mockings of the poor count's luckless soul; to see it pant in vain for change, for its old companion, its covering of clay, and all the excesses that covering could procure for itself, excesses which the soul could not enjoy without the body, or the body without the soul.

Was he never to be Bertha's lord?—was this the only way in which she was to be his? At her death was he to glide into eternity, without again dwelling on the round world? How many more years of passive purgatory was he to endure? These were the doubts and questions that assailed the troubled spirit.

When most troubled, most wretched, he sometimes heard a sound as of bat's wings, flitting past him, a loud, a screeching, ringing laugh, and, "Poor Count Ludwig!" jeeringly uttered in a hoarse, deep voice, close beside him.

This was the only sign of the invisible world that met him, the only *sensation* the moping spirit experienced.

His thoughts, by degrees, withdrew themselves from the woman he had sold himself to purchase, and fixed themselves on his own miseries. He became a *hipped* spirit, as different from the spirit that once upon a time lay buried in Count Ludwig's muscular frame, as the spirit of a *roue*

in the heyday of life, at the summit of his inglorious glory, and the spirit of the same *roué* in the days of his sickness and death.

How little Bertha dreamt of the miserable fever of soul that for her sake, and through the count's headstrong doggedness, was going on day and night without one second of intermission close beside her! Her mind was calm; she cared not, though her husband had reduced her train to one waiting-woman, and one pretty, merry little page.

There had been among her followers an outcry strong and loud, for salaries long unpaid, and not forthcoming. De Beaugency had been assailed by them—a "*strike*" had been ventured upon by the injured serving men and maids; he had been remonstrated with upon their grievances; they might as well have talked of grievances to his boots.

"*Canaille!*" roared the infuriated Pierrot. "*Canaille!* Salaries indeed! Is it not salary enough for rags like you, to serve the wife of le Sieur de Beaugency?—Salaries!—Begone!—Leave my presence!—Depart—*Savetiers que vous êtes!*—Salaries!—Divide that among you—leave this hall of my fathers, and dare at your peril, again to sully its precincts with your impure presence!"

So saying, he flung a purse among them. They

divided the spoil which covered the debt, and the pay and feed in Pierrot's house being neither so costly or so delicate as his dress and his fare abroad, with one accord they made their packages and sallied forth, nothing daunted, to seek their fortunes elsewhere, leaving la Dame de Beaugency to her page, her maid, her dumb favourites, her discontented attendant spirit, and now and then to a few minutes of her reprobate husband's annoying, dreaded company.

CHAPTER XI.

TIME trotted on in his even, unvarying pace, though to some he seemed to gallop, while to others he appeared to halt along, and lag by the way. He went evenly forward, nor changed his pace, nor turned back one step for wish, or prayer, or sighs. No! on he went, and la Dame de Beaugency had become "fat" in addition to "fair" and on the verge of adding "forty" to both.

She had not left Paris from the day on which she entered it with her devoted, tender Isidore; and long though her *séjour* there had been, she knew no more of it than two large streets, and one small one, which she traversed as often as she went to mass, in the little dark church to which they led.

Her acquaintance with the inhabitants was as

limited as her knowledge of the city. Her confessor was the only person, except an old chirping physician, with long beard, solemn garb, and thin legs, with whom she had any acquaintance at all, and they now and then varied her society, displacing for a while her maid, her page, and her little *ménagerie*.

Her *ménagerie* was changed—changed by old Time and Death—Zizi slept in peace in the garden; his shrill bark was silent, his wagging tail at rest. Another canine succeeded to his title and place. He, too, bore the name of Zizi, and the gentle weight of his mistress's affections. Peterkin reposed by the side of Zizi I.; his gambols o'er, his bright eyes closed, his brushy tail depressed. He, like Zizi, had his successor, and he too bore the name of Peterkin, and he was caressed and fed with sweets, and petted, and tamed, and sported about, a confirmed case of spoilt squirrel.

The birds had emerged, from generation to generation, from the eggs of their progenitors all lineally descended from the first pair, which Maître Pierrot, ere his gallantry had turned to crustiness and insolence, had presented to *sa Berthe chérie*.

The old sleepy German had shared the fate of the dog and squirrel, the first of their name.

She had not been included in the general *turn-out* of the retinue. Whilst they had been remonstrating with their careless master, she had been sleeping a snoozing sleep after a comfortable repast.

She thought not of salaries—sleep and food were her all in all. Of these Pierrot had not deprived her, so she had no complaints to make. She slept, she ate, she slept again, nor dreamt of leaving her mistress.

Poor old lady! As winter came on, she, with her own fat hands, laid in a supply of *sour-krout*. To this, one fatal night, she added a supper of sausages, and of bacon; to these she added a second course of various savoury preparations, and then a *finale* of cheese, of pastry, of dried fruits of her own preserving; nor did she omit to quaff a due proportion of sweet, thick wine, warmed and richly spiced, and then, not having stinted herself in one *friand* morsel, she, according to a well-known saying, adjourned "*de la table au lit*," though certainly not with "*un saut*," for she repaired thither with the short, heavy step of a well-fed, portly personage.

To the dismay of the household, she was there found dead the following morning. "*Elle avait si bien soupée*, she could not be ill!" This was the public opinion. That very supper killed her.

By her decease, Bertha was left without one person with whom to speak in her native tongue. Count Ludwig no more was saluted with the loved accents of his country, save when she played with her pets, and bestowed all her endearing German epithets upon them.

Time holding on his way, brought no change to him. He was as young as when first he parted from his flesh. Gloomy, discontented, miserable, but not old. Could he but cast himself once more into a young body, he felt he should be as young as ever.

Winter had again set in. The daylight was fading from dusk to dark, the cold, thin wind rushing down the dry streets, and up the wide staircases, and along the lengthy corridors of Maître Pierrot's quiet mansion. Quiet, for neither he or his choice spirits were there. Bertha had not seen him for a whole week. He was carousing at Christmas-time in town and country.

He too, was altered. His long slight figure had grown portly, his pale visage bloated, his large black eyes sunk and bloodshot, his springy gait somewhat heavy, his well-turned leg was shrinking as his figure enlarged; his attire was still the same, gaudy, flaunting; juvenile in the extreme; his manners light, ferocious, conceited, giddy, as

great a compound of contradictions as in former days.

As daylight had died away, Bertha had risen tired from her frame, over which for hours she had been bending. The vivid colours were no longer distinguishable; a brocade cover was thrown over them, and the work put away, till the next morning should see the renewal of her labours.

The wood fire blazed lightly on the hearth, the voices of romping children at play in pursuit of warmth, were heard in the street, mingling laughing and shrill with the wind. The dame de Beaugency reposed in a large soft chair by the fire, Zizi II. sleeping at her feet, Peterkin II. as usual, nestling in her arms; her confessor, a tall, *flabby* priest, sitting opposite her, his hands now resting on his knees, now travelling slowly up and down his shins as he roasted them at the comfortable blaze, and then stretched to a little table standing by him to replenish a glass from a thick bottle of rich, luscious wine, which he slowly poured down his throat, and then holding the glass to see the oil run down it, smacked his fat lips and nodded his head in silent admiration of the soft draught. Then he crunched one sweet biscuit, then another, till they

and the wine had disappeared. Then he rubbed his shins, looked towards the dark clouds through the tall, narrow window, rubbed his hands together, scratched his gray head, and sighed a long, irresolute sigh.

"I must be going," he said. "It is horridly cold. I promised to see two or three sick people this evening. One *must* be dead by this time, so *he* does not signify. The rest there's no hurry about, except old Maître la Grippe, that old miser I told you of, who starves himself up four pair of stairs."

"Is he very ill, poor old man?" inquired Bertha.

"Why not over well," responded the priest, casting a long side look towards the empty bottle, and draining off the drop, which aped a heeltap, from the long glass. "He wished to see me to-night. He is a pious man, and the pious should not be kept waiting. It is cold though up in his garret, and he lies shivering under an old horsecloth. He mortifies himself for the good of his soul and the church. He is very rich. He gave one image a gold petticoat, that would have stood upright in a gale of wind. So rich, so stiff, such substance!" and here he emptied the crums from the plate into his hand and swallowed them at a mouthful.

Bertha arose, and with her squirrel under her arm crossed the room, drew aside part of the tapestry, took up a key, which with others hung at her side, wherewith opening a little cupboard she brought forth a small flask, covered with a covering of curiously-wrought straw, which, together with a sweet cake, she placed before her confessor, and, resuming her seat, easily persuaded him to leave his dying miser to his cold and wretchedness a little longer, whilst he sat with her discussing the cake and wine, and drawling forth amusing gossip, ghostly advice, and culinary observations, snugly sheltered from the cold and wind without. Count Ludwig's dejected spirit complained, as it perceived the comfortable fire, the creature comforts, and thus bewailed itself:

"Miserable soul that I am, without one enjoyment on earth. I pine for my bodily happiness, and here I am not knowing whether my body is dead or alive, or what has become of it, whether it is dust in the forest, or cinders in—, never mind, it can't be helped! Well! not one morsel of food, not one little drop of wine, have passed my lips these many long, long years. How should they? I have no lips, no stomach, that I can call my own. Oh! the enchanting hunger and thirst I felt after a day's good hunting over

the hills in a fresh breeze! Shall I never feel them again, never satisfy them as in days gone by, never more sit at table with my good comrades and pass the overflowing flagons? Alack! alack! my merry hall, shall I never feast in you again? And my companions! They, perhaps, think sometimes of me, and drink to my memory, and think the goblins have got me. Got me? So they have, hand and foot, that is soul and body, the cheating fiends! And what have I gained by my precious dealings in the forest that stormy night? Why, gained nothing, and lost every thing, to be sure! Bertha has forgotten me. There she sits, as fat and easy as possible, in spite of her rake of a husband. Yes! there she sits, not dreaming of what I did for her sake!"

He might more properly have said, "for my own," but he did not.

"Never has she spoken of me for many a long year, and when she did, it was only to laugh at the way I was poked out of my saddle by that square fellow at her tournament. Will she never be mine? Oh! my malediction on that Zamah as he is called! Mine? No! never. And besides, if she should be, she is not the same pretty young Bertha I intended to make my own. She is growing fat and old, and my Bertha

was just plump and the right age for me, and this woman would be much too aged for my ideas. No! she would never suit me, never. Damnation! I shall never, never, walk, or eat, or drink or hunt, or make merry again, and all through my folly! I have given myself up for what I am not to have, or which, if I did have it, I should not care about. Oh! that I could dislodge even that oily old priest's soul, and insinuate mine into his body, if it were only for a day, only for an hour. How pleasantly he warms his fat legs, and eats his cake, and how deliberately he pours out and pours down his wine! Happy old fellow! Oh! my miserable existence, will it never end? I cannot feel that comfortable blaze. How the old man puts the log on, and turns it over into the best position for burning; how he spreads himself out before it! His eyes half close and his words become few. He is going off to sleep, and Bertha also. How I once slept, and slept too over a snug fire, with good wine, rich wine, and good food at my side! Oh! even that devil of a spoilt dog has a better life than mine. Life? I don't know whether it is life or death, or both, or what! There they are, both asleep, nodding their heads at one another, and the priest snoring like the serpent, in his own choir—not that I ever heard it. When Bertha goes to church,

there I stay, to be made a fool of by the hobgoblins, and that detestable monkey. My patience is wearing out, worn out, gone. Ah, me! Thunder and devils! Miserable soul! what can I do, what will become of me?"

In this way the ever-waking soul amused itself. The priest and Bertha were indeed asleep, one on each side the fire—the blazing fire that gave such a cheerful light, and burnt so clear, denoting a frosty night. The priest's old miser put his thin lilac nose from beneath his thin horsecloth at every sound, and returned it, disappointed at his non-appearance. The priest was snoring by a good fire, the priest felt the languor given by his potation of good wine, the priest dreamt of the bishop's state dinners, and forgot the little, yellow, skeleton miser, and his airy garret, and ponderous gold.

A loud ringing at the house-bell disturbed the fat curé's repose. He sat upright, put his hands on his knees, looked at the fire and listened. For a few minutes the rushing wind was all he heard, then the distant sound of voices, then the tread of many feet, ascending very slowly the stairs at the end of the corridor on which the room in which he sat, and many others, opened. The voices spoke now and then in a loud whisper, there were pauses between the sounds of the footsteps.

Wherefore, he could not tell, but the priest felt somewhat terrified, and ill at ease, as he sat staring at the door. He shuddered, removed his looks to Bertha, who still slept, and extending his foot pressed Zizi's tail. The dog yelped and started up; Bertha awoke.

"*Qu'as tu mon mignon?*" she said in a soothing voice.

"Listen, madam!" said the priest, and having told her what he had heard, she gave her attention to the sounds that alarmed her confessor.

The steps drew nearer, slowly, and as if some persons were conveying a heavy weight. They stopped.

"Which way now?" inquired a voice.

"To the right sir," answered Bertha's little page.

On hearing him speak, she arose and opened the door. The priest followed, keeping behind her, and being a tall man, taking a survey over her head of what was passing in the corridor. Zizi too went to the door, but feeling the cold wind, ran back to the fire, and casting himself down before it, resumed his sleep, whilst Master Peterkin retreated into his snug house.

Bertha stepped into the corridor. About midway down it, and opposite another which branched off to the right, leading to her husband's apartment, she beheld her page and the

porter, each a light in his hand, attending a gentleman who was followed by two men, bearing between them somewhat which appeared to be a body covered by a bloody sheet.

Bertha hurried towards them.

"*C'est ma maîtresse,*" said the page to the gentleman.

He took off his cap, and bowing, begged her to retire.

Bertha, without noticing him, looked beyond him.

From beneath the sheet hung an arm and a clenched hand. The sleeve she recognised at once—the flame-coloured velvet slashed with yellow, told of Maître Pierrot's tawdry taste.

Count Ludwig's spirit remembered it too, and felt interest, which was a sensation he had not experienced for many years.

"Is the fellow dead? What has happened?" exclaimed the soul, as distinctly as soul could exclaim; but lacking a speaking apparatus, it was not heard by the beings near him.

Bertha spoke to the same effect, though in gentler words.

The gentleman shook his head. "I fear he is," was his reply.

The men moved on, and under the guidance of the little page, who trembled and looked pale, they reached Maître Pierrot's chamber.

It was a large, dark, high room, with paved floor, and black rafters. The bed of dark-green damask, capacious and lofty, stood at the farther end.

The two men approached it, followed by Bertha, the gentleman, and the curé, and on it deposited their burden, and then stood awkwardly looking on, shifting their position from one foot to the other. They were two dirty, ragged fellows of the *bas peuple*, evidently picked up for the purpose they had served.

The wind howled down the huge chimney, and rattled the latticed windows—the lights burnt dimly in the large, cold room, their rays absorbed by the dark hangings—the breath of the persons there assembled, was visible in the frosty air.

They surrounded the bed: the strange gentleman had told Bertha that her faithless husband had been slain, and now, by his order, the two men who had borne him, removed the sheet from his body, and exposed the remains of Maître Pierrot to their sight.

The little page cast one look, and giving his light to the porter, rushed horrorized from the room.

The eyes of the corpse were wide open, bloodshot, and leaden; the jaw too hung open, and the teeth were visible beneath the blue and

swollen lips: The grizzled hair hung disordered about the distorted face, the ends wetted by the blood that had run from a long wound, just beneath his throat. His doublet was open, and his shirt torn and stained by the stream, that flowed from another wound in his breast.

Bertha grasped the gentleman's arm, and uttering an exclamation of horror, he led her from the bed to the room she had just quitted.

There lay sleeping Zizi, unconscious of the *roué's* violent death, and there stood the priest's refreshments, to the liquid part of which, he having marched back in double-quick time, and feeling somewhat discomposed by the spectacle he had just seen, duly applied himself.

Bertha felt stunned and sick, smitten with horror at what she had seen. She did not weep, for there was no grief for Maître Pierrot's death; she felt shocked, as she would have felt at the sudden death of an indifferent person, but her husband's conduct had rooted from her heart all the love and affection of a wife.

The stranger was perfectly cool; he stared at Bertha, and there was admiration and pleasure in his looks; he seemed to appreciate the beauty of "fat, fair, and forty."

With *nonchalant* ease he seated himself by her side. He was a tall, large man, fair-complex-

ioned; but the fairness of his face was changed by the wine-cup to glowing red, shining fiery beneath his light hair, thick and curly, but more than three parts gray. His blue eyes twinkled like a Falstaff's, to whose, his portly body bore some resemblance.

Bertha did not notice him; he turned from her to the priest. They determined on passing the night in the house, that *cette gente dame* might not be without protectors.

She was glad of this, and her page and woman equally so; for although they had spent many a night in the large, rambling house, without protectors, there was something so terrific to their eyes, in so spending one, beneath the same roof with a murdered corpse, that when the serving-maid had by her mistress's invitation crept into her bed, which they had decorated with a caricature of a saint, lighting a holy taper to defend them from ghosts and demons, when the poor little page had nestled in with the pitying old porter, not sorry to have a companion; and when the priest and the stranger had piled up a good log-fire, settled into their comfortable chairs, and drawn their table of good things close between them, they all felt comparatively easy as regarded their fears, and soon all the house excepting Count Ludwig's soul, and Maître Pierrot's body, were

sleeping comfortably and soundly through the long cold night, unconscious of frost, of wind, of ghost, of ought on earth, that could disturb their rest.

CHAPTER XII.

WHILST mortals slept, the count's spirit soliloquized.

"He is dead at last! I thought to gain something by that event, but here I am, weary, and miserable as ever. No change comes to me, and I suppose I must drag on ten, twenty, a hundred, who knows how many years in this tedious state of semi-death! How can I gain Bertha? A puff of wind might as well try for her—not that I want her now—I'd rather be without her, in honest truth. What I wish and ardently desire is to be once again a living man, as in bygone days. Oh! what a fool I was to give myself up so entirely to a fiend, to gain that which I had rather be without! What is to happen next? Am I to be wedded to this woman, old enough to be my mother—that is, nearly old enough—

or am I to watch her in her dotage? Laugh on," he continued, as he heard the mocking laugh, sounding down the huge chimney, "laugh on, I am used to you, and care no more for you than for the roaring and blustering of the wind Laugh on, you cannot injure me more than I am injured, cursed imps!"

The spirit did not keep to the truth. The laugh, as it mingled with the loud gusts of wind, maddened him.

"Poor Count Ludwig! Poor Count Ludwig!" was shrieked out in derision, and the sound half carried away by the blast, did not tend to improve his temper. Curses and complaints darkened the spirit. His tormentors continued their jeers and taunts till morning light returned, and recalled the household to day and life.

The tall stranger, who had gone home to embellish himself for meeting Bertha, returned at noon and sought her presence.

He gave her a detailed account of her husband's death, to which she calmly listened.

Maître Pierrot had entirely given himself up to play; he understood the mysteries and sleight of hand, the dexterous tricks and shuffles of a swindling gamester, and these he put to good use. He had long since run through his wife's fortune, the use of which he repaid to her by

neglect and unkindness. The fortune gone, he subsisted like his comrades, by his wits, and the reputation of what he once had been; contriving to keep up appearances, as though he were the lord he had represented himself to be.

Many were the young victims of his dexterity; many a ruined youth learnt from the man who had stripped him of his gold the art of replenishing it by trick and address.

In the course of his *practice*, Pierrot made acquaintance with a young Spaniard, noble, rich, and just let loose on the world; rash, impetuous, hot, and unthinking; thirsting for pleasure, touchy, punctilious, and resentful. He liked Pierrot, and under his guidance ran the round of every dissipation Paris could give him. He lived sumptuously, and treated liberally; whilst his master in iniquity lived on his generosity.

The Spaniard's passion was play, and in that he was gratified; Pierrot the while making heavy his own purse with the exact weight of which his was lightened. The winged gold flew swiftly. The Spaniard lived on credit; and ruined himself with *clat*. His last day as a fashionable, dazzling *roué* arrived. His friends, Maître Pierrot included, dined with him. The long, dark, winter's afternoon, was spent in play, in drinking, in song. The fires blazed, laughing and riot

covered the whistling and moaning of the wind. Gold was piled on the tables, and passed from purse to purse, oft changing owners.

The host played high, with various success for a while. Fortune turned her back upon him, he lost game after game; he grew irritable, and lost his self-possession; his eyes gleamed; he doubled, redoubled his stakes, and still he lost. Pierrot knew the state of his affairs: Pierrot knew that this day must be his last; he had given the word, he and his accomplices were to carry off the booty, and divide it among themselves.

The Spaniard was encouraged to go on. Wine was pressed upon him, adding to his confusion and irritation. The day died away, and lamp-light saw them urging him on.

The moment had arrived; the Spaniard staked his all, and lost it; Pierrot was the victor. His victim leant his elbows on the table, twisted his fingers in his long black hair, and hid his eyes in the palms of his hands. He uttered a groan of anger and agony. Suddenly looking up, his furious eyes rested on his betrayer and his accomplices. Pierrot, leaning back in his chair, was in the very act of executing a knowing wink at his grinning friends, whilst with a jerk of his arm, he pointed with his thumb contemptuously at their dupe.

"Traitor!—Robber!" he roared in a hoarse and trembling voice. "Thou shalt die!"

Seizing a long knife that lay on a table of refreshments, he made a spring at Maître Pierrot. Now Maître Pierrot retained his dread of steel and fighting. He darted behind a looker-on, who was overthrown by the furious Spaniard, and rushing from the room, took flight through the well-known mansion.

He reached a back staircase, opened a small door, and traversing the garden, climbed the wall, and descended into a narrow dark street on the other side.

Here Maître Pierrot stopped an instant to breathe, deeming himself in safety. The garden-door suddenly flew open; the Spaniard rushed forth like a tiger; the efforts of his guests to restrain him had been vain. Wounding all who opposed him, in his maniac wrath he burst from them, whilst they remained to divide the gold.

A servant who had seen Maître Pierrot's exit, and laughing, thought it the escape of a detected cheat from chastisement, betrayed his route.

The Spaniard sprung upon him, brandishing the long sharp knife.

Pierrot shrieked, "*Au meurtre! aux assassins!*"

The knife was buried to the handle in the side

of his neck, withdrawn, and plunged into his breast. The murderer pushed him from him, to the ground, leaped over his body, and flew for refuge to a place of safety.

The stranger, who was known by the name of Louis de France, found Bertha's worthless husband lying in a pool of his own blood, darkening the dry white pavement. He was scarcely cold. De France called for succour. Two *ouvriers* came at his call. A sheet was procured, and the remains of poor Maître Pierrot carried home to his widow as before described.

Thus he perished. A violent and sudden death closed the *aventurier's* useless and mischievous life.

De France had known him intimately for some time, which perhaps was not much in his favour. The particulars of his death he had just learnt from some of their mutual friends—at least such particulars as had fallen under their observation —seeing that they had not taken the trouble of leaving the scene of their triumph to witness his deathblow.

The Spaniard escaped without detection, to lead a vagabond life in other lands.

De France, who looked on Bertha with an admiring and pleased gaze, tendered his services to her, and begged she would command them. To

this offer she replied courteously, as was she wont.

There was something about her new acquaintance with which she was not pleased. What it was she could not say. He was attentive, obsequious, and kind in his manners, and yet there was something about him which, to Bertha, was altogether repulsive. There was a smile about his swollen lips, a twinkle in his blue eye, a tone in his fat utterance, that to her were most unpleasing. She thought that she must have seen him before, that she had heard his voice in other times, and yet *his* were not precisely the features or voice of which they reminded her, and where she had seen those features, and heard that voice, she was at a loss to remember.

Towards night, all that remained on earth of the little beggar, the *jongleur*, the favourite page, the *soi-disant* Sieur de Beaugency were, with funeral pomp, conveyed to the grave. De France and the fat curé regulated every thing concerning his obsequies. A grand mass was sung as the corpse, surrounded by tall tapers, rested a while in the choir, after which the *aventurier* was lowered into his tomb, the tall tapers were extinguished, de France retired to sup with the widow by his own invitation, and the fat curé and his "coadjutor" sat down together to their

sumptuous evening meal, revelling beforehand in the pay they decided was to be their reward for having so magnificently sung the soul of Pierrot to rest. They were premature in their decision; but of that more anon.

Bertha and de France sat down *tête-à-tête*. She was all calm and *nonchalance*, he all assiduity, and before they separated, more than half-tender.

Count Ludwig's soul mentally scowled at him.

"Am I again," he said, "to see her wooed and won before my eyes? Eyes!—nonsense, what am I thinking of! Am I again to behold her give her silly self to a third husband, and to such a great, fat, gouty-looking old fellow as that? He must have been a handsome man too in his time; but that time must have been a long, long while ago; as long as the precious years I have wasted up here in the air, unseen by the world at large. What folly is he treating her with now? How can she endure his compliments, spoken in such a plethoric voice, and the blinking upturning of his red-rimmed eyes? She does not look very much enchanted either. How different she is from the baroness, that poor dead cat of a de Beaugency made love to! Ah! what a lovely Bertha that was—the Bertha I lost myself for. How prettily she listened to all his

flimsy nonsense, how furious the soft words she gave him made me! Can that plump, comfortable woman be the same being? Handsome she certainly is, but she is not my Bertha. How coolly she listens to the man! Her little fat hand presses her eyes through sleep, I verily believe, and not through the emotion she felt, when her long-sided husband fell down on his pointed knees, and made faces at her. What an ape he was. He is going at last! What does the fellow say?"

The "fellow," after reverently kissing Bertha's hand, said,

"Allow me, *belle dame,* to see you again to morrow. My late friend's affairs may perhaps give you some trouble. Permit me to assist you. *Les jolies têtes* of your sex were not made for dry difficulties. *Daignez conter sur moi.* You will find me a loyal friend and servant. I must not hope for more at present."

Hereupon he pressed his cap to his breast, and bowing as low as his rotundity permitted, backed out of her presence.

Bertha played with Zizi till he fell asleep, and she fell into a revery, *que voici.*

"I am a widow again! How different from what I was in my first widowhood! Then my head dwelt on nought but feasts, and knights,

and tournaments, and, —" she sighed just here, "and poor dear Isidore. Not the poor man I have just lost, but my own darling, handsome Isidore. Alas! alas! I can never, never, meet with another lover like him. What am I to do? I should like to return to dear old Germany. I have no relations it is true, but what have I here! Nothing but Zizi, and Peterkin, and my birds, and I can take them with me. But then I cannot go alone," and here the good lady was at fault. The idea of de France presented itself, and the idea did not please her; and then she digressed to other subjects, which digressions grew more and more unconnected and confused, whilst the sensible images of the red fire, and other objects around her, grew more and more indistinct, and she, without coming to any conclusion, like Zizi fell into a deep sleep.

The slumber in the beginning was peaceful and happy, but ere it ended he who had so often disturbed her waking peace, broke in upon her dreams. Maître Pierrot, decked in the bloody sheet, knelt by her side, uttered the soft words of her Isidore, and, seizing her hand, pressed it to his livid lips. With a scream Bertha awoke, to find her fire out, her lamp expiring, and herself miserably cold. Not daring to look around her, she darted from the room with the light, fol-

lowed by her dog, and hurried to her bedchamber, without venturing to cast a look down her departed husband's corridor. Crossing herself as she passed on, she reached her room. Bed and her waiting-maid received her. The saint was hung up, the taper lighted, Bertha hiding her head beneath the clothes, tightly closed her eyes, and sunk into that happy state of oblivion called slumber, where for the present we will leave her.

CHAPTER XIII.

De France had spoken truly concerning the deceased Pierrot's affairs, and Bertha was not sorry to accept his services in looking over them. She understood nothing of such matters, and besides, she was too easy, and too indolent, to take much trouble about any thing.

De France saw how they stood at one glance. Maître Pierrot had spent every *dénier*. The talent by which he had kept afloat slept with him in the grave; and his widow, the *ci-devant* Baroness von Kranzfelt, once the lady of a massy castle, the woman who had imprudently given herself and her fortunes to the impudent impostor, stood alone in the world, without money and without friends.

"I prophesied this," thought Count Ludwig's soul, rather exulting in his sagacity.

It was no subject of exultation to poor Bertha. She patted Zizi, wept over Peterkin, forgot her embroidery, and knew not what to do.

Her new acquaintance was ever with her. In spite of her distaste to him she lent on him for support, though she could not divest herself of the species of horror she felt for him, so entirely as she might have wished. Her fat confessor too was some comfort to her, until finding the turn her affairs had taken, and that there was not the slightest chance that his pious offices, and those of his ally, in singing *à tue-tête* at Pierrot's funeral, would ever be rewarded, his broad shadow but rarely darkened her portal.

De France then was her only resource, and Bertha was too soft, and too gentle, to allow any disgust she might feel for any person, to grow up into a dislike likely to become a barrier between them.

He evidently became more and more delighted with her, and all his endeavours tended to recommend himself to her favour. She neither encouraged or discouraged him, but held on the even tenour of her way, without turning to the right hand or to the left.

The count's spirit was fretted, but his fretting was unfelt by any save himself, and though sometimes he strove to growl and swear himself

into a man, he neither succeeded in that fallacious endeavour, nor could all his sarcasms threats, and oaths, alter the current of passing events.

That Bertha should remain any longer under the paternal roof, as she had fondly deemed it to be, of the noble race of de Beaugency, was not possible. The real owner, of whom Maître Pierrot had hired it, wished to take up his abode there himself, and applied to de France, making known his wishes to that effect.

He, in his turn, communicated them gently and with tact, to the widow.

"Alas! sir," she replied, "what am I to do? Without money and without a home, whither shall I go?"

"What are your wishes, my beautiful lady?" he asked, taking her hand, which she did not withdraw, being perhaps taken up with her sorrow. "What are your wishes? You have but to speak and I will fulfil them."

"I hardly know," she answered, stroking Zizi's silky head with her disengaged hand as he lay on her lap. "I think I should like to return to Germany."

"That is cruel to us men of France; but as

your wishes lead you to Germany, it is my duty to see them accomplished."

He gently pressed her hand, and then withdrawing his own, he added,

"You cannot think of exposing your gentle frame to all these winter hardships, or of setting out on your long journey before the spring returns? Remain with us till that time, and then, perhaps," he continued, with a somewhat apoplectic sigh, "you may be persuaded to remain with us for ever."

Bertha did not notice the sigh, or see the look which followed it, her eyes being bent on Zizi's head. She replied without removing them:

"I will abide, sir, by whatever you may advise. What I am to do I know not, or how I am to live—unless," she continued, looking very sad,—"unless I can find means of selling my embroidery. Do you think you could find any customers for me?"

She looked at de France as she spoke, but her eyes again fell on her dog. She felt a dread at her admirer's looks hardly to be described. Though his eyes were of the palest blue, so light as to be nearly gray, and although their expression was at the moment intended to be kind in the extreme, there was a lurking, sinister, mocking, gleaming

look in them which Bertha could not endure. He smiled a smile, *en suite* with the look, and casting his eyes in the direction of Count Ludwig's attentive soul, for at that moment the soul was very attentive, he nodded familiarly, as though he saw it, and then replied to the lady,

"*Belle dame*, do not talk so. Employ your delicate fingers for your amusement, as you did in brighter days. Allow me to think of every thing else. You shall see me again in the evening, if my presence is not an intrusion. Calm yourself. All my cares are for you, and I will not forget le Sieur Zizi, and Maître Peterkin!"

He laughed as he ended his speech, and put forth his hand to pat the dog; but Zizi, who never manifested any particular pleasure at seeing him, shivered and snarled and made a bite at his fingers.

Amidst his mistress's reproaches for this breach of the peace, de France took his leave, again nodding at the spirit, and looking particularly confidential and familiar.

The spirit could not return the salutation, not at the moment having the means to do so; but he was filled with wonder at such a proceeding; he who had not been noticed for so many

years, save by the chorus of impish laugh and song.

"Who can this fat man be?" thought the wondering soul. "He seemed as if he saw me, and nodded as if he knew me; if he does not, he is a deuced impudent fellow; but I must not be particular now, I suppose; I have neither arm or sword to help me. Did I see rightly, that is, did I not deceive myself? He could not see such a puff of smoke, as Count Ludwig has become for his sins. Am I going mad, and imagining what is not? Can one go mad without a body I wonder? I know nothing about it—it is very unfair of that Storberg devil, to hang me up here without a body, and yet make me no further a spirit than taking that body from me—I have no privileges of a spirit, and no pleasures of a man—I know only what passes just before me, I have no beast of burden, to carry my soul about, like the beings of flesh around me. I am as ignorant as in my earthly days, save and except that I suddenly understood French as well as my own tongue, and I am sure living for years as I have done, is paying dear for the accomplishment.

"What could that jolly-looking de France mean by nodding at me? I wish he could help me out of my predicament. It is evident that he

is making love to Bertha—I wish he would take her off my hands, and the fiend would put me politely into my body again. Oh! how merrily I would begin the world! It cannot be—will it ever, ever be? I am a poor, miserable devil—I have often heard of those disconsolate animals, and now I am one. What do I say? a disconsolate animal? Alas! I am not an animal—would that I were. Wretched, cheated spirit, miserable soul, that is what I am.

"Alack! alack! why did I ever tamper with the powers of darkness? I am lost, I am undone?"

"Poor Count Ludwig," in the old strain, now sounded round him, together with the hated, well-known laugh; whilst from the white smoke curling from the logs and embers up the wide chimney, divers ugly faces peered forth at him, each ere it vanished, making itself doubly hideous, by performing a deriding, a contemptuous, an impudent, a laughing grimace, according to the taste of each individual head.

The poor count, from raging and complaining, passed the remainder of the day in a state of moody sulkiness, such as I have seen envelop many a flesh-clad soul in the present day; which kindness, gaiety, goodhumour, administered one and all, fail most often to remove,

whilst sometimes the Abernethean blue remedy does the work like a charm, and restores a savage brute to a state of gentlemanly civilization. Such a remedy was unknown in the count's age, and besides had there been present the great practitioner himself to administer it the surly spirit could not have profited by it—he was all soul!

Evening brought de France to Bertha's side; she was seated before the fire, letting the beads of her rosary fall leisurely through her fingers whilst she muttered some bad Latin, and now and then ate a comfit, from a little carved *bonbonnière*, that stood on the table, thus sweetening the penance she was getting through at by times, for having inadvertently taken Friday for Thursday; and on that day having admitted a roasted pullet to her table and her mouth.

The count's spirit was intent to see if he should again be saluted by the familiar nod. De France did not look towards him, his eyes were fixed on the rosary with a cowed look of displeasure. Bertha dropped it as she rose to receive him. He picked it up between his finger and thumb, as one would take up a worm, and letting it fall on the table, threw his cap over it, then sitting down near Bertha, he spoke; she, not enduring

to encounter his peculiar gaze, bending her eyes intently on the fire.

"Most amiable Bertha," he began, "let not your gentle heart be cast down. It is true that the most thoughtless, the most cruel of men, has reduced you, lovely woman, to the depths of poverty, has stripped you of home, of fortune, has left you but your beauty, your virtuous soul, your self-esteem."

Here he stopped to cough a short, dry cough, and to take breath. Bertha knowing not what to say, said nothing, and he continued,

"I cannot see you thus; my heart was yours from the happy moment in which I first beheld you. I am rich, I am powerful; my power knows no bounds; the mighty king of these realms boasts no authority equal to mine."

"What a mendacious old rogue!" thought Count Ludwig's spirit.

The portly de France looked towards him and frowned, and then went on to say,

"Most injured woman, would you deign to give me your heart in return for mine; would you deign to share my greatness; would you permit your fond lover to dispel the clouds which surround you?"

"Fond lover!" jeeringly thought the spirit.

Again de France turned, frowned, and sternly shook his head.

Bertha played with her keys, and still kept silence.

De France drew his chair nearer to her, and leaning on hers, said,

"Speak, dearest of women! You think, perhaps, that I am too hurried in my declaration, but could I see you left alone and desolate without speaking, without pouring out my heart before you?"

"What nonsense!" thought the spirit, who in spite of the frown which again menaced him, could not repress his thoughts.

Bertha now deemed that she ought to speak, yet what to say she knew not. Maître Pierrot had taught her a hard lesson on the hollowness of fair speeches and tender declarations. She half feared the man who now pleaded; but then she reflected on her poverty, and then she thought of the riches which had tempted her false husband; for Bertha, in the quiet of her solitary life, had with many sighs come to the conclusion, that it was for them she had been wooed.

She raised her eyes and met his peculiar gaze, the gaze with which his small blue eyes, embedded in his round cheeks, seemed to look beyond this world. The look, as usual, pleased her not. She could not say yes—she would not say no!

She hesitated, and de France, spoke again and smiled as he did so, taking her hand gallantly at the same time.

"You ladies are all alike, *des franches coquettes*, one and all. I have been too precipitate, my heart tells me so—the heart which urged me on to speak; do not say, no! Reserve your decision for a while, for one week, and then sentence me to happiness or misery. Do you agree to this, *jolie dame?*"

"Most willingly," answered Bertha, looking as if a heavy weight had been taken from her mind.

"You must not refuse me this one small favour," said de France; "will you condescend to remain where you are until you are mine? I feel an inward voice, which tells me you *will* be mine. I have arranged every thing for your *séjour* here; do not refuse me, you will hurt me if you do."

The tone in which these words were uttered was so unlike the fat man who should have spoken them, that Bertha surprised and startled, could hardly speak her consent. The voice which pleaded for it was so insinuating, so fascinating, her heart beat in spite of herself, beat as in former days when Isidore's sounded on her ear.

De France rose, pressed her hand to his lips, put forth his own and took his cap, without casting his eyes on the rosary, but winking derisively at Count Ludwig, left him to his meditations, and the widow Bertha to ponder on his words, and give his offer her deliberate consideration.

CHAPTER XIV.

Bertha reflected on her new lover's words and her own position, alone and penniless in a foreign land. On the one hand was misery, on the other plenty and a husband. To the plenty, she found no word of objection, it was the husband that made her pause. She did not like him, she could not disguise it from herself; she did not, could not like him. There was something in his manner, despite the kindness of his words and actions, something which she could not understand, which she had never met with before: something, she could not tell what, that gave her a dread, a species of horror, whenever she was near him.

Then her impoverished state rose before her, and poor Bertha remained sitting before her eternal embroidery, her empty needle in one hand, the

bright silk destined to fill it in the other, and fixing her eyes on space, grew sad as she thought.

"I may perchance love him in time. He must be very good, and very kind, or he never would have acted towards me as he has done. I have no riches to tempt him, he cannot wish me for those. As for beauty, my poor beauty is gone long since, I fear. Alas! alas! what can I do? To whom can I apply for advice? I have no one to counsel me, no one to protect me. He would protect me, would take me out of my poverty. Is it not then folly to reject him and his generous offers, because his eyes and his manners do not exactly please me? I should grow accustomed to them in time. I will then marry him—and—yet—I—ah, me! I cannot—but—if I do not, I condemn myself to all the misery of existing without one *sous* for which I do not work hard. What can I do, Peterkin, dear?" she said aloud, as her squirrel sat up, his bushy tail over his back, sawing through a nut with his sharp teeth.

Peterkin answered never a word, and Bertha was again plunged in the *pros* and *cons* of deliberation.

Count Ludwig's soul contemplated her as she thought. He ardently wished to dive into the

depths of her mind, and perceive what was passing there. That was an impossibility, the count could only perceive the workings of his own, and they brought him but small repose. They were so cross, so surly, so impatient, it would be an insult to present the reader with such a mass of dark and furious meditation, as that which deformed the spirit of the aerial count.

Bertha had time leisurely to consider de France's proposition. A little page, a lean dark boy, with eyes that gleamed like fiery coals, a sharp and sarcastic visage, restless movements, and sinister air, was ushered into her presence, and bowing with a jerk, rapidly delivered his message, which was to the purport that her adorer was too unwell to wait upon her himself, but he was commanded to learn her wishes, and obey them in all things. Bertha had none, and the boy was dismissed.

De France was separated from the lady of his love during a whole fortnight. He was ill, racked with agony, so said the page, and told the truth.

De France said he was in love, devoted to Bertha; and it is painful to record of a lover, not that he is ill, for in some illnesses there is an interest, a romance, a tender sentiment, but

it is painful to record of a lover that he is suffering, intensely suffering, from—the gout!!

Such, however, was the case. De France had the gout, a severe, excruciating fit of the gout.

When at the end of a fortnight's absence he reappeared before Bertha, her mind was made up, her resolution taken, her answer prepared, and she received him kindly, insisted on placing him in the easiest chair, and made him rest his leg on another. She did not see the arch look with which these attentions were received. The count's spirit did, and lent all his attention to what was passing before him.

After a few customary "preliminary observations," de France asked what his destiny was to be, whether good or evil.

"Good," replied Bertha,—"at least I hope so, since as far as I am able I will endeavour to make it what you wish."

Burly, portly de France, took his leg from one chair and rose from the other, and then went through the ceremony of kneeling to Bertha and kissing her hand.

"Patience," thought Count Ludwig. "I saw her marry one fool, now I shall see her wed another, and I suppose continue my blest entertainment of fasting through feasting, and exist in weariness for many long years to come."

De France's lean page was in the room. He was his confidential attendant, and served him as a walking-stick in his infirmity. He looked towards the count, put his hands on his knees as he stood, darted forward his head, and made such a face at him, so comic, so full of sarcasm and meaning, that the spirit, in spite of his moodiness and anger, laughed in spirit at the ugly boy.

Before the accepted lover hobbled away, the day, the hour, every thing was arranged for the wedding. The recent death of poor Maître Pierrot was no impediment. De France said no one in Paris knew Bertha, and with poverty staring her in the face, she was glad to take refuge in matrimony from its chilling gripe.

"Poor Count Ludwig! Poor Count Ludwig!" shrieked all the wearisome, jarring voices, as de France winked at him, and the page put out his long sharp tongue at him on leaving the room. He gave himself up to a torrent of invectives.

He was furious at seeing himself once more supplanted. What he was to do, what was to become of him, he knew not. He raged like a chained lion; he had no peace. The laugh of the goblins continued night and day without intermission, accompanying the words "Poor Count Ludwig," repeated without a break, and never

ceasing. Hundreds of hideous faces danced before him, all misshapen, grotesque, *goguenards*, and insulting. Night did not save them. By night, by day, never for one second did they disappear.

De France and his ugly-looking page, upon whom, as upon the Don in "Gil Blas," you might have studied osteology, so lean and lank was he, never failed to salute him with gestures and grimaces of triumph and derision. He was in a whirl of confusion, anguish, and despair, too strong for mortal man to bear; but then the count was a spirit, and existed under it, though he called upon destruction, and mentally committed suicide a thousand times a-day. He reviled de France, abused the demon, and wished that poor innocent Bertha and the charms that had fascinated him, had never, never seen the light. The blind, foolish count never taxed his own headlong passions and want of principle, the true causes of his misfortune. What man, who has sold himself to the great deceiver, ever does?

The day, the hour arrived! Bertha was again arrayed as a bride—not the fair young bride she once had been. No! she was a sedate, a stately, and yet a handsome bride. Her future had decked her with Parisian elegance and splendour,

with gems, with lace, with every rich and costly material.

He was dressed in all the magnificence of the age. Unlike her Isidore, his step was grave, his figure heavy, his air sedate. What he had been might be gathered from the *beaux restes* that remained to him. They were a handsome pair, but most unlike lovers on the eve of marriage.

How poor Count Ludwig raged and fumed! The laugh, the taunts, the grimaces of the persecuting hobgoblins increased with his vexation. The meager page, in a splendid suit of white and scarlet, outdid them all in the contortions of his apelike countenance, with which he insulted him *à la dérobé*, as quick as lightning, when no one perceived him.

The tormented soul was soon at Bertha's side, in the midst of a throng of de France's friends, all invited to do honour to his wedding. Their compliments, their congratulations all expressed as the French alone could express them, were to him bitter as wormwood. He strove to detach himself from the passing scene; to plunge himself into annihilation, to cease to be. Vain efforts! De France led forth his bride. Again Count Ludwig escorted her to the church. The fat curé awaited her at the altar. The goblins gambolled

in the air, cut capers, pointed at the count, shrieked with laughter, and loudly sang.

Arrived at the church-door they uttered a ringing "halloo!" clapped their hands, whistled like a boatswain's whistle in a gale of wind, and shouted, "Happy Count Ludwig! Happy Count Ludwig!"

"Happy! Oh! cursed tormentors, cursed tormentors! Happy! I am miserable, miserable for ever. Never, never, again shall I be—"

The spirit's oration was broken through.

De France looked at him, smiled maliciously, and nodded. The lanky page beckoned to him, and pointed at his master. The spirit for one moment lost all consciousness, the next saw him awake again to life, encompassed by the huge, fat frame of de France!

The soul, so long absent from a body, once again found itself incased in flesh and bone. He paused a second, looked round, and then entered the church. The loud organ peeled forth, the voices of the priests began to chant beneath the echoing roof, the perfume of incense filled the building. Count Ludwig was astounded, his brain in a whirl, dizzy and confused. Mechanically he walked towards the choir by the side of his bride. He dared not speak, he knew not what voice or what language would be his.

He had no time for thought; the service began, ended, and Bertha was his—his, after so many long years of expectation. He kissed her cheek, and the crowd of guests returned with him to his home. A kind of instinct led him towards it. It was a large and splendid mansion. Servants, pages, musicians, awaited them. Count Ludwig looked about him with an air of abstraction. Bertha and his friends remarked it. They attributed it to his change of condition, and were satisfied with the reason they had found.

The feast was spread. The count, seated by his bride, presided. His eyes sparkled, his whole attention was given to the glorious sight before him. After years of fasting he sat at a magnificent repast. The most *recherché* dishes of the time were there; wines of every kind; plate of exquisite manufacture, and all his own. His delighted eyes roamed over the well-loaded table. Oh! the happiness of again eating, again pouring down deep draughts of wine. His whole attention was given to the occupation, with now and then a thought to what he was. Bertha was nearly forgotten.

His meagre page, who answered to the name of Charles, stood behind, and before he could speak brought him all he wished for. What a consumption of food he made! Solid, delicate

savoury, sweet, rich, every thing pleased him. French wines, German, Spanish, precious liqueurs, were all welcome.

Count Ludwig spoke but little, but he discovered he had the power of speaking both French and German equally well.

His *convives* remarked his silence, and wondered; de France, as they still called him, had always been remarkable for his talents, for conversation, and a sarcastic enveloped wit, fine and powerful, so superior as to escape the vulgar, and make itself known only to those who could appreciate it. All this seemed vanished, and their host turned into a *gourmand*, a man with a mind as heavy as his body.

Now and then he turned and spoke to his bride. The unnatural expression of his eyes had disappeared, they were unmeaning and goodnatured, and Bertha thought her husband improved. He prolonged the repast, and ate and drank without discretion. He had a long fast to break. Dancing followed, in which the bride was forced to take part by the gallant young men around her, whilst the count, sinking into a large and easy chair, closed his heavy eyes, and fell into a sound sleep, in spite of noise and mirth; which sleep, the first that had refreshed his weary soul for many years, lasted several hours.

All wondered more and more at the complete translation of their host. He who in spite of his rotundity and gout, had been the most lively, the most mercurial of them all. His body, indeed, seemed to be sleeping there, the victim of repletion in defiance of all etiquette; his spirit seemed changed, and so in truth it was.

There was one among the throng, who, taking advantage of the example of the lord of the mansion, slept too; a sound, fat, plethoric well-nourished sleep, and that was Bertha's robust confessor. His cloth protected him, and he slept in peace. The count's repose was not broken through till Charles, his page, awoke him, with the welcome intelligence that supper awaited him. He stared wildly about him and said "Supper!"

"*Oui, monseigneur, le souper est servi,*" said Charles, looking at him with an ugly leer.

He roused himself, and the occurrences of the day, after an effort, reappeared before his confused mind. He arose, and led forth his lady to the well-garnished tables, and there he enacted a second act of the pleasing performance of the morning. Charles had no sinecure. The count wished for every thing. Hardly a dish or a wine escaped him. He had a great deal of lost time to make up. His guests spoke to him as old ac-

quaintances of events he was supposed to know. He had the sagacity to look as wise as he could, and answer as concisely as possible.

"*Mais qu'a-t-il donc, ce bon de France?*" they asked each other. The reply was a shrug. They at last gave him credit for behaving as he did on purpose. They set it down as the eccentricity of a wit, an *original*, a *drôle de corps*, and were satisfied.

The count continued to feast, nor left the table till summoned to his bed. Thus was spent the first day of his return to earth, the day on which he obtained that for which he had sold himself —the Baroness von Kranzfelt.

CHAPTER XV.

One day, two days, three days, sufficed not to terminate the festivities and rejoicings which were held in celebration of the count's wedding. A whole week was consumed in the delights of feasting, and dancing, and gaming.

Count Ludwig only interfered with the first, he was wholly engrossed by it, every thought wrapped up in it. Of his wife, his Bertha, he took little heed. He had seen so much of her in his ethereal form, she was so different from the woman he had sold himself to buy, that now, after so long a season spent in expectation of obtaining her, after all he had gone through to become her owner, she was nothing to him, less than nothing—he had rather have lived without her.

The festivities drew to a close, and the count

had leisure to feel and think on his new state of being, and he began to perceive that this new state of being was not so exquisite as he had fondly hoped it would have proved. In the first place he had figured to himself that in returning to man's estate he was to have animated his noble frame; the strong, the active frame he had slipped from in the forest of Storberg. Not at all! He found himself in one of the same stature, but it was heavy, enfeebled, feverish. The soul, after being so long free, felt but ill at ease in such a covering. The count's reminiscences of earthly life told him of a fierce and rapid tread, a strength, a sensation of independence, a buoyant health now looked for in vain. His tread was slow and ponderous, his strength tried by the weight of fat he carried; his health gone. The soul and body were at variance. The soul thought of hunting, hawking, riding, all in vain! The body could not serve the soul, could neither hunt, hawk, or ride. The body's feats were confined to eating, drinking, sleeping. These did very well, but the count wished for the others also; for a run in the lists, a good measuring of lances with an expert rival. Alas! the weight of armour, added to the weight of man he bore, would have been too great for mortal knight or horse to carry.

The count cursed the fiend! His mind was young, his body old—ill suited to each other, like an ill-matched husband and wife—always differing. Could it be his own body? he thought it was. On his skin were three moles, disposed like the stars in Orion's belt—he recollected them; there was also the wound in his side, at least the scar of it, made by a boar's tusk—that too he remembered: then, his remaining teeth were formed just like stout Count Ludwig's beautiful square set; his hands had lost their hardness, as though they had long exchanged exposure, and the sword and lance, for warm rooms and a knife and fork; but then the left was minus the first joint of the little finger, bitten off by a wolf in the agonies of death, and that proved to him their identity. It was his body, but how changed! How had the change been wrought?—he knew not. He pondered and puzzled on these things as he reposed in his easy chair after his plenteous repasts.

Bertha quietly returned to her old life, her work, her dog, her squirrel, her birds. She congratulated herself on her match—she never troubled her fat husband, or he her—she had money at will, and he was not a spendthrift.

How he had acquired his wealth, he knew no more, than how he had taken up his abode in his

soft body. In a large iron box he found deeds signed by his uncle, which he bade Charles read to him, by which his possessions were secured to him, so he troubled himself no further about the matter.

Charles too was an object of wonder to him. He could not guess if that shadow of a page was aware of the *change of mind* his master had undergone or no. There was a perpetual ambiguous smile on his long, thin lips, a sarcastic look in his twinkling black eyes, that reminded the count of his old tormentors, the goblins; but which it was far beyond him to comprehend. The page was never seen to eat, except when he caught the buzzing flies with a dexterous sweep of his long fingers, and conveyed them to his mouth. He was full of mischief, the dread of every man, woman, and animal in the house.

The count made a desperate effort to hunt, came back weary, exhausted, and cross, and gave up all idea of it. He was not happy—he felicitated himself, however, every time he went near his wife, that inconvenient as his body was, he was no longer suspended as heretofore, helpless and invisible in her vicinity. Her embroidery frame, her Zizi, her Peterkin, and even her placid, plump self, gave him such unpleasing *souvenirs*, that he felt no pleasure in being with

her; on the contrary, it gave him such sinking of spirits he seldom approached her.

In his young German life he had never known illness—a thundering headach at long intervals, after a carouse of extra strength and duration, had been the extent of his ailings; now he had suffering of another sort to undergo. After a season of unbounded licence in feasting, he awoke one morning—oh! horror—he awoke one morning with a decided, severe, good fit of the gout.

"Poor Count Ludwig!" the sprites might have cried, but they had ceased to molest him. The gout was gnawing away without remorse at his fat knee; he swore, he growled, he raged, no sick King Harry could have been more ferocious. Irritability, low spirits, all the agreeable attendants on gout, had full play unrestrained by the patient. He knocked Charles down like a ninepin, twenty times a day, threw pillows, and slippers at Bertha, when she attempted to amuse him, and roared like the monarch of the forest, at every thing and every body.

Poor Bertha was his chief aversion; she was the innocent cause of his bad bargain in the forest, and the gouty count could not endure her.

"Turn that woman out, Charles, I say!" he

shouted, when like a good wife she came to tend him. "*Scélérat! m'entends tu?* She is the cursed cause of this infernal gout. Out with her! out with her! *Obéis, petit morvuex*! Turn her out, I say!" and whirling through the air flew a large cushion full at poor Bertha, who beat a retreat, and never attempted again to nurse her sick bear.

His mind and body were equally diseased; the body full of gout and fever, the mind of discontent. He wished to be dashing full tear over hill and dale, through forests merrily hunting; then came an awful twinge and a tremendous oath, then reproaches to the demon, denunciations against Bertha, a swinging blow to Charles, who ducked with a speaking leer, and missed it, whilst the count's hand came in furious contact with the table.

The physician recommended abstinence and quiet.

The count ground his teeth and abused him; fed on rich dishes and defied him. His temper became odious; a lawless, brutish mind in a diseased overfed body.

The fit passed off; the count again betook himself to feasting and riot. He was not very fond of his companions—he hated the French, and wished for his old boon companions of Ger-

many; he thought of returning there, his spirit would have done it, but his spirit's gouty clog said *nay!* and he was forced to obey the large, lazy, inactive creature.

Bertha saw as little of him as she had done of Maître Pierrot of blessed memory. She lived at her ease, she had never been so happy. Her work, her pets, her charities, were sufficient happiness for her; her fair, fat face, was the faithful representative of the happiness she felt, and spread among all who came in contact with her.

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Two years passed away of Count Ludwig's married life, and how did he spend them? In alternations of gout and revelry; his pampered appetite was never satisfied; ignorant and sensual, all his pleasures were bodily; his mind grew more and more violent and insupportable; miserable, too, he was at times, and wine alone could dispel the clouds from his spirit. The gout is certainly a trying malady, and an antidote to amiability, but the count gave way to the fury excited by the pain so heartily, as to be a perfect maniac, whilst his fits of passion lasted. No sooner was he convalescent, than cooks and butlers were fagged to feed the greedy monster, and quench his wondrous thirst. An attack of the gout brought the physician on

the stage, and gave them a slight respite; whilst Charles and other attendants were scolded, raged at, cuffed, and abused, Charles generally contrived dexterously to dive away from the blow; the less clever domestics bore the marks of his fury, in black eyes, swollen noses, and other such like pugilistic embellishments.

Count Ludwig grew fastidious in his fare; his brutalized mind was buried in culinary pursuits. The fat *curé*, who had become his bosom friend, aided him in his researches, and in discussing the fruits of their labours. None but the most savoury, the richest, the most *récherché* dishes were tolerated; the consequence was, that each succeeding fit of gout was more intense and more unbearable—the priest then feasted with him in the sick room. The count at last gave up all society for his, and the two *gastronomes* sat, red-faced and fat, eating, drinking, and disturbing the silence only by the rattle of their knives and forks, a few concise words of commendation, or a demand for a fresh supply of food.

The count grew enormously fat—a disfigured man. With growls he one night went to bed, prophesying an attack of gout by morning light, and prophesied truly: and such an attack the poor count had never before endured, or so badly borne—he was like a chained bear. His friend,

the priest, dropping in at midday for the *petite-santé* dinner—a dinner sufficient to scare away the *santé* the most robust, found the sick man too sick, in too much pain even to eat, growling and roaring alternately. The *curé* drew back the curtain, let in the light to view his friend, and began in soothing tone, "*Mon pauvre ami!*"—

"*Vas au diable, avec ton pauvre ami!*" bellowed Count Ludwig, aiming a blow which sent him tottering backwards against Charles, who stood grinning by, and the priest's fat legs becoming entangled in the page's sparrow-like supporters, they both fell to the earth together, catching at the bedclothes as they went, pulling them off the gouty count, leaving him rolling with rage and agony, and shaking his gouty foot aloft in a paroxysm of passion.

The priest sneaked off to see what fare the lady of the house had to offer him, and her sweet wine, cake, and *confitures* somewhat restored his agitated spirits, whilst Charles was left to remedy the damage as well as he could. The count grew worse in spite of his physician's efforts, and as he grew worse, he began to grow frightened for the first time in his life. He thought he might die, and by way of drowning the thought, swal-

lowed a huge tankard full of hot spiced wine, and fell into a sound sleep.

When he awoke it was night. He opened his eyes and fancied he heard the old cry, "Poor Count Ludwig! Poor Count Ludwig!" together with the goblin's jeering laugh. He shut his eyes again; the sound was gone. Once more he opened them, and looked round him. The fire was burning comfortably and briskly, and threw a warm red light through the oak-panelled room. The wind was whistling in one monotonous shrill note, the rain beating in small sharp drops against the window, and spitting down the chimney on the hissing fire. By it, on a stool, sat Charles, his long hands resting on his pointed knees, his eyes fixed on the flames.

The count turned heavily in bed. He felt very ill, his heart trembled with fear. He thought again of death, of the fiend, of his soul. The drops of terror were bursting forth. He groaned and called Charles. The page did not move. A second time he called, and enforced the call with an oath. No answer! Another call, an oath, and a little delicate abuse, and then an order for another flagon of wine.

As he ended his command, the wind made the room rock with a furious gust, hailstones dashed against the panes, the mocking laugh

Charles

and taunting cry sounded loudly and long; and Charles, on whom his eyes were fixed, suddenly vanished, leaving in his stead the little monkey imp.

The ape made a spring from the stool to the bed.

"Is it wine you want?" it exclaimed, in its hoarse croaking voice. "No! no! my old lad, no more wine for you! You have had your quantum, and your hour is come!"

The count felt paralyzed. He could not speak; the monkey continued, as it sat on his stomach peering down at him like an Incubus.

"No more wine or wassail for you, jolly count! You have had your baroness, your feasting, what more would you have, you ancient villain?"

In a feeble tone Count Ludwig groaned forth, having regained a small portion of his pristine valour,

"What would I have, you ugly ape? Why, justice! I want justice! Why was I hung up in the air for so long, and then shot, all of a sudden, into this crazy, heavy old body? Answer that! Why did that cheating fiend use me so?"

"Calm yourself, my good sir!" said the ape, putting his hairy finger on the count's large and

burning nose; "calm yourself, and listen. You gave your body during life, and your soul at death, to my master, Zamah of Storberg. Well! he and you could not use it at the same time, so he suspended you close to your love, took your great heavy body, and laid it on a rocky shelf in his cave. Now, whenever he wished for a little frolic on earth, that corpse being comely and strong, he made use of it, and well it served him, Many a good carouse it has been in, whilst your countship was blustering for a glass of wine—for one—only one!"

The count swore. The monkey said,

"Fie, dear! do be quiet. In time the body like a shoe, grew old and unfit for service; and my good master remembering his compact with you, you monster of ingratitude, set about fulfiling it. At his leisure moments, when he had nothing else to do, he came to Paris, and played at Count Louis de France, won your fat bride for you, and gave her to your arms, leaving me as page, to see that you did not escape his hands. I have done my duty, my good fellow, and a dull time I've had of it. It was much better fun to follow him, as your body carried him about to the revelries, that wore it out and destroyed it. There you were, keeping guard over your precious baroness, and all the little hobgoblins laughing

at you, little pretty dears, till the tears ran down their fascinating little cheeks!"

The count groaned and clenched his fist.

The wind redoubled its howling, the rain its dashing.

Voices sounded down the wide chimney.

"Make haste, Brownback!" they cried; "make haste—you are wanted—master is going to the sabbath—make haste!"

"Coming!" cried Brownback.

"Poor Count Ludwig! Poor Count Ludwig!" shrieked the voices, and laughed peal upon peal.

Brownback the monkey hopped on the count's chest, with supernatural force held his head down, back on the pillow, with one little spare hand, whilst with the thumb of the other he pressed his throat with the pressure of a vice.

Count Ludwig gave a convulsive struggle, a gurgling moan. The deed was done—he died!

The monkey dashed up the chimney amidst the roaring of the storm, a rapturous clapping of hands, shrieking, and laughing from the delighted goblins, who accompanied him in triumph to the Sabbath where he cut a great figure that night.

The following morning the servants found their master's body, lying lifeless on its broad back. The physician pronounced that apoplexy

had caused his death: he pronounced and was believed.

Bertha, a widow for the third time, remained so till the day of her peaceful death. She lived retired and happy in a small town of Germany, quiet, cheerful, and beloved, to a good old age.

As for Master Charles the page, his sudden disappearance caused equal astonishment and joy. The surmises touching his vanishing, were lost in the preparations for his master's magnificent funeral.

His ally the *curé* assisted at it, having ascertained about his pay beforehand.

He reposed beneath a splendid marble tomb, whereon the tenant was sculptured in armour, his hands joined, rising perpendicularly from the pit of his stomach. In this mausoleum his body was safely deposited.

> "But what became of '*Count Ludwig's* soul
> Was never to mortal known."

THE END.

WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

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Government of Maharashtra
on 05 January, 2016